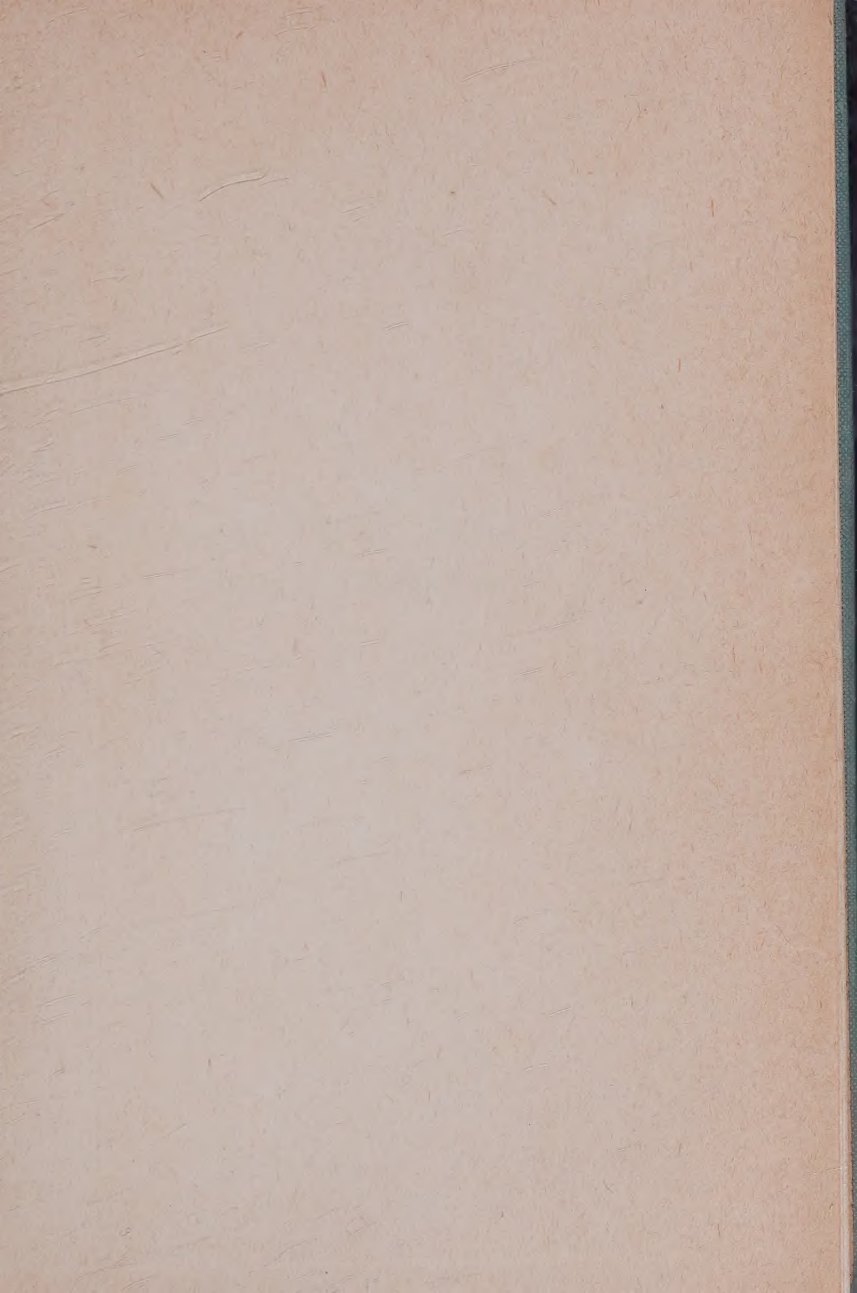


CHURCH YEAR
SERMONS
FOR CHILDREN

PHILLIPS E. OSGOOD

1/6



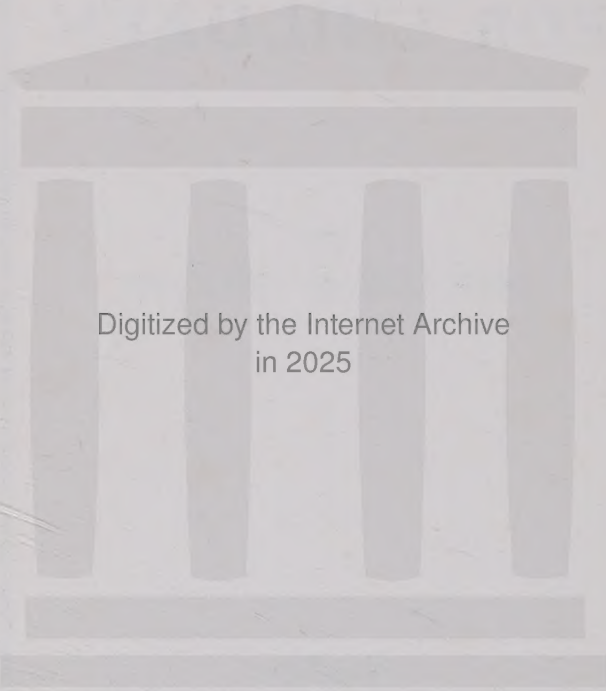
CHURCH YEAR SERMONS
FOR CHILDREN

CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

BY
PHILLIPS E. OSGOOD

London
SKEFFINGTON & SON, LTD.
34 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, W.C. 2
PUBLISHERS TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING

1919



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

TO
MARJORIE AND CATHERINE
MINE OWN "GIFT OF SELF" TO THE
"CHURCH OF TO-MORROW"

AND TO
THE EAGER-HEARTED YOUNGSTERS
INTO WHOSE FITNESS TO HELP REBUILD THE WORLD
I HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED TO PUT
MY BELIEF IN THEM FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH

FOREWORD

NEVER before has there been such a need for sermons for children. The war puts a new value on the children of England, and any effort to awaken their sense of responsibility by filling their minds with compelling imagery, by training their eyes to see visions, and by calling for their deepest sympathy, will find a ready use.

The writer of these sermons has had a long and successful experience in talking to children, and many teachers and preachers will welcome the inspiration in method and material which this collection of sermons will give.

WILLIAM E. GARDNER.

INTRODUCTORY

THESE Sermons-in-little are perhaps wisely to be prefaced with a few explanatory words.

1. They are "graded" to the eleven- or twelve-year-old. This seems to be the middle-of-the-road age for "children." If one has preponderantly younger or older hearers, there will be some things that need adaptation.

2. Certain illustrative articles are from time to time implied. Such focus-means of attention add manyfold to the effectiveness of any address to children. They bind fast the eyes; as ears are bound to words. And if a certain skeleton of phrases can be repeated in cumulative crescendo, expression will be added to impression and still more of one's meaning driven home. Such suggested phrases are printed in capitals when they seem fitting. Each time a phrase is repeated, repeat all the preceding ones as well.

3. The addresses in this volume approximately follow the Church Year. They are for moments preceding the regular sermon to the "grown-ups" and are therefore only small in compass. There are, however, a few more extended Festival Addresses, such as special children's services seem to call for, as the "real" sermon. If the indicated

mechanics of these longer talks prove inexpedient they may, of course, be omitted. But the author personally believes they "make" the sermon, from the children's point of view.

4. There is much repetition of ideas. To lift children into their next spiritual level of thought demands constant familiarizing with its axioms. These sermons have as their ideal no mere Sunday morning amusement or attention-getting. They aim to accomplish a definite spiritual result, educative of character and its motives.

CONTENTS

I. ADVENT SERIES: "TO START WITH"

	PAGE
1. THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT	
" A String of Beads " (<i>Galatians</i> ii. 20) . . .	17
2. THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT	
" The Little Idol " (<i>St. Luke</i> xxii. 42) . . .	20
3. THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT	
" A Cup or a Sieve ? " (<i>Revelations</i> xxii. 17) . . .	24
4. THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT	
" Santa Claus and Jesus " (<i>Acts</i> xx. 35) . . .	27

II. CHRISTMAS SERIES: "THE CHRIST-CHILD COMES"

5. CHRISTMAS DAY	
" The Door of the Heart " (<i>Revelations</i> iii. 20) . . .	33
6. THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS	
" Swaddling Clothes " (<i>St. Luke</i> ii. 7) . . .	40
7. THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY	
" Gold and Frankincense and Myrrh " (<i>St. Matthew</i> ii. 11) . . .	43
8. THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY	
" Snowflake Stars " (<i>Job</i> xxx. 22) . . .	47
9. THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY	
" Saint Christopher " (2 <i>Corinthians</i> xii. 9) . . .	50
10. THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY	
" Supposing " (<i>St. Luke</i> ii. 44) . . .	53
11. THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY	
" R. S. V. P. " (<i>Psalms</i> xcix. 6) . . .	56

III. LENTEN SERIES: "DISCIPLINE AND DISCIPLE-ING"

	PAGE
12. SEPTUAGESIMA	
" The Mark on His Forehead " (<i>The Baptismal Office</i>)	61
13. SEXAGESIMA	
" Lions, then Giants " (<i>1 Samuel</i> xvii. 34)	68
14. QUINQUAGESIMA	
" The Scapegoat Habit " (<i>Leviticus</i> xvi. 10)	71
15. ASH WEDNESDAY	
" Three Crosses " (<i>St. Luke</i> xxii. 42)	74
16. THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT	
" The Tear-Bottle " (<i>Psalms</i> lvi. 8)	78
17. THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT	
" Noah's Ark " (<i>Genesis</i> vii. 16)	81
18. THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT	
" The Magic Carpet " (<i>St. Luke</i> xxi. 4)	85
19. THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT	
" Five Stones, Not One " (<i>1 Samuel</i> xvii. 40)	89
20. THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT	
" Nothing but Leaves " (<i>St. Mark</i> xi. 13)	92
21. THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER	
" The Palm Badge " (<i>St. John</i> xii. 13)	95
22. GOOD FRIDAY	
" The Secret of Happiness " (<i>St. Mark</i> xv. 21)	99

IV. EASTER SERIES: "ALL THINGS NEW"

23. EASTER DAY	
" The Bread of Character " (<i>St. John</i> vi. 35)	107
24. THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	
" The Easter-Tree " (<i>St. Mark</i> xiii. 28)	115
25. THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	
" The Candle and the Hearth Fires " (<i>Psalms</i> xxvii. 1)	118
26. THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	
" Spider-web Folks " (<i>Job</i> viii. 14)	121

CONTENTS

xiii

27.	THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	PAGE
	“Seed and Soil” (<i>St. Luke</i> viii. 11) . . .	124
28.	THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	
	“Seed and Soils” (<i>St. Matthew</i> xiii. 3) . . .	127
29.	ASCENSION DAY	
	“The Fishing Boat” (<i>St. Mark</i> i. 17) . . .	130
30.	WHIT-SUNDAY	
	“Hermit-Heart” (<i>Hymn</i> 375) . . .	136
31.	TRINITY SUNDAY	
	“The Mask and the Megaphone” (<i>The Catechism</i>)	139

V. SUNDAYS AFTER TRINITY

A. “OUT OF DOORS”

32.	THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“Feathery Leaves” (2 <i>Timothy</i> ii. 24) . . .	145
33.	THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“A Path in the Woods” (<i>Psalms</i> xvi. 11) . . .	148
34.	THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“Pruning” (<i>St. John</i> xv. 2) . . .	151
35.	THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“Flying Kites” (<i>Psalms</i> xviii. 10) . . .	153
36.	THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“The Fountain Keeper” (<i>Psalms</i> xxxvi. 9) . . .	155
37.	THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“The Eagle’s Nest” (<i>Deuteronomy</i> xxxii. 11) . . .	159
38.	THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“The Bee-Hive and the Ant-Hill” (<i>Proverbs</i> vi. 6; <i>Psalms</i> cxviii. 12) . . .	163

B. “GAMES AND SCHOOL”

39.	THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“Follow-the-Leader” (<i>St. Luke</i> ix. 59) . . .	166
40.	THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“The Coach of the Team” (<i>Philippians</i> i. 27) . . .	168
41.	THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“A Sacrifice Hit” (<i>Psalms</i> lxix. 7) . . .	171

42.	THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	PAGE
	“ For Keeps ? ” (<i>The Sixth Commandment</i>)	173
43.	THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“ Fractions and Decimals ” (<i>Romans vi. 11</i>)	176
44.	THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“ How Subtraction Sometimes Adds ”	179
45.	THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“ Swearings ” (<i>St. Matthew v. 34</i>)	182

C. “ JUST STORIES ”

46.	THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“ Giotto's O ” (<i>Zechariah iv. 10</i>)	186
47.	THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“ Battle-Axe or Scallop-Shell ? ” (<i>St. Matthew xxviii. 19</i>)	189
48.	THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“ The Whistle with a Steamboat ” (<i>Proverbs xvi. 18</i>)	193
49.	THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“ I Will ”	195
50.	THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“ Feathers in the Wind ” (<i>Psalms xxxix. 1</i>)	197
51.	THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“ Without Wax ” (<i>Genesis xvii. 1</i>)	200
52.	THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“ Beauty and the Beast ” (<i>St. Mark xii. 31</i>)	203
53.	THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	
	“ The Fish Kites ” (<i>1 John v. 4</i>)	206

VI. VARIOUS

54.	ALL SAINTS' DAY	
	“ Hallowe'en ” (<i>The Creed</i>)	211
55.	THANKSGIVING DAY	
	“ Two Mules' Burden of Earth ” (<i>2 Kings v. 17</i>)	214
56.	THE FOURTH OF JULY	
	“ To the Rescue ! ” (<i>Hebrews iv. 16</i>)	218

I

ADVENT SERIES

“TO START WITH”

The First Sunday in Advent

[*A necklace of beads.*]

A STRING OF BEADS

“ I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”—Galatians ii. 20.

HERE I hold a string of beads. Will some one tell me which is the more important in a string of beads, the string or the beads? You cannot wear the beads without the string; and you wear the string for the sake of the beads. Both string and beads are necessary to make a string of beads. You do not want either of them without the other.

The beads must also be beautiful to be worth wearing. Common things will not do. Something with colour and lustre and graceful shape is needed for handsomeness. As for the string, it must be strong. You would not use a weak thread for such beads as these. This necklace here has a fine gold chain for its string. That is the best of all possible cords for such beads.

We are starting to-day on a new year in the Church. It is not January 1st by the calendar, to be sure; but the Church has its own New Year's Day—the First Sunday in Advent. The Church Year has its own calendar and its own meaning. Instead of the four seasons, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, it has its own seasons. You know them, probably, almost as well as I do—

18 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

Advent, Christmastide, Epiphany, Lent, Eastertide, and so on. As we live through them we find we are living the story of Christ's life all over again. The days of the Christian Year are like beautiful beads strung on the gold chain of Christ's life. Our part in the living of the Christian Year is like the beads. One after another they come; with a kind of colour and shine and shape to each moment all its own. We do certain happy things at Christmas; we deny ourselves for others in Lent; our hearts sing as never before with Easter Spring-joy. But the cord that holds all the days together in one, and does not let us just *happen* on one meaningful time or another, hit-or-miss; this is the golden chain of Christ's life inside and through all our experiences in the Church. THE CHURCH THREADS THE BEADS OF OUR LIVING THE CHRISTIAN YEAR ON THE GOLD CHAIN OF CHRIST'S LIFE.

That is the first meaning I have for you. But there is one more. And it is even more important, I'm sure. Every minute of every day you and I are busy at some kind of thought and of action. Every tick of the clock marks our making another bead in the necklace of Character. What kind of beads are we threading? Every obedience must be a gold bead; telling the truth must be true blue; keeping the heart clean surely is whiteness; cheerfulness makes beads of sunshine yellow; trying hard makes royal purple; sweet-temperedness makes silver beads. We do not want the mud-coloured, crumbly, scratchy beads of bad temper, disobedience, sulkiness, laziness and of contrari-

ness. They do not belong to the kind of character-necklace those who love us want to see us a-threading. For those who love us give us a fine gold chain to put our beads on, and we can only bear to put the *right* kinds of beads on so precious a "string." It is the fine gold chain of Christ's life in your heart and mine. We cannot have our string of beautiful beads, which is Character, unless we have both beads of good deeds and thoughts, and the cord of Christ's life inside our own.

GOD THREADS THE BEADS OF OUR CHARACTERS ON THE GOLD CHAIN OF CHRIST'S LIFE IN OUR HEARTS.

There is a sentence out of the Bible that tells how St. Paul found this to be true of the necklace of Character.

"I LIVE, YET NOT I; BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME."

Let us try in the coming Church Year,—and beyond,—to thread all our living on the life of our Christ!

The Second Sunday in Advent

[A small idol, or picture of one.
Polynesian if possible.]

THE LITTLE IDOL

“Not my will, but Thine be done.”—St. Luke xxii. 42.

WE learn some things “by heart,” we say. I wonder, though, whether some things we think we have learned by *heart* we have really learned only by *brain*! No matter how good a phonograph record we have made of our memory, so that we can repeat ever so splendidly some set of sentences, never missing a letter—until we have taken the underneath meaning into our hearts and had it all mean something to our feelings—until that happens we haven’t learned by *heart*. For instance, will you say together for me the Second Commandment? . . . I knew you could. For the Ten Commandments are probably learned by *brain* by you all. But have you learned it by *heart*? I know you are willing to learn it *more* deeply by heart, at any rate. Let us try now.

This queer doll I have here will perhaps be our teacher, though, of course, I shall have to talk for it. It is not a doll at all, but a little idol from the far-away islands of the South Sea. It has eyes of pearl-shell, and a cloak of cocoanut-bark, and a necklace of sharks’ teeth. Its dark wood body

is all tattooed with zig-zag lines. It has a crown of red and yellow feathers.

This is what the little idol might be saying to you and me if it had a tongue. "Once upon a time my people did not say, as you do, 'What a funny old thing!'—but they came crawling on their hands and knees to my thatched shrine, pushing baskets of fruit or skulls of enemies along the ground with their foreheads, praying to me to bring them good luck in whatever they wanted to do! It didn't make any difference what they wanted, they asked for my help. The thief prayed for good luck in his next robbery, and promised me part of the booty. The cruel warrior touched his poisoned spear to my forehead to make it still more deadly, and went out to lie in wait for his enemy, with the hope that I would give him good luck. The witches and wizards performed their magic dances under my eye. Never a single person came to me but to get good luck for something he *already wanted*. I was not asked what *I* wanted done; every one said what *he* wanted done; whether it was good or bad or only foolish. I was only to give the good luck. WRONG-THOUGHT-OF-GOD SAYS, 'JUST GIVE ME GOOD LUCK.' And when oftentimes the good luck did not come (for I really am nothing but a piece of wood and have no power at all), the disappointed man came back and *whipped me*, to make me do better by his selfish wishes next time. Until finally the tribe decided I was not much good, and threw me on to the rubbish heap."

This is what the idol *might* say if it had a

22 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

tongue. Do you see what the whole trouble is with the idol and the man who uses the idol to bring him good luck? Isn't it just that the idol seems to say, "Do just as you want to"? The poor savage seeks his idol's help to attain anything he desires. His idol-god never said to the thief, "Thou shalt not steal." The man starting out treacherously to murder his neighbour in anger never dreamed that his god could say, "Thou shalt not kill." Oh no! Instead, the idol-god was supposed to say, "Do just as you like. Count on me to help all I can." The savage never came anywhere near saying, "My God knows best what is right; I will let him tell me my duty."

We are Christians-in-little; and we believe in no idol, we think. We *think*. But wait just a moment. If we think of God only as One to Whom we can pray to get whatever we want, with no thought whether we *ought* to have it or not;—if we are trying to get God just to be our Good Luck, are we not perhaps getting an idol instead of the true God? What is that idol of only Good Luck? Have we seen it? Well, let us look in the looking-glass next time we pray only for good luck and see the idol that has really been ours!

If we want the true God, we must think ever so differently. We must be ready to obey His desires. We must do as He says. We must believe He knows best. We must let Him educate us, discipline us, train us. We must learn unselfishness. We must let God command us.

What was it we said just a moment ago?

WRONG-THOUGHT-OF-GOD SAYS, "JUST GIVE ME GOOD LUCK."

Let us add something better—

RIGHT-THOUGHT-OF-GOD SAYS (with Jesus), "NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE BE DONE."

**The Third Sunday
in Advent**

[A cup and a sieve.]

A CUP OR A SIEVE?

“Whosoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely.”
—Revelations xxii. 17.

I ONCE heard of a tiny little girl, just beginning to walk, who always came bringing her own silver mug when she wanted a drink of water. But one day she made a mistake. And what do you suppose she brought instead of her mug? A sieve! It was almost the same size and the same shape as her mug, but it was made all of wire, of course, and not a drop of water would it hold. The stream of cold water went straight on down through the sieve. The tiny lady soon saw her blunder and scampered off for her cup.

Here is such a cup as she usually brought for her drink of water; and here is such a sieve as she brought that other mistaken time. *You* know the difference, to be sure; and you smile at the little child's innocence. What! Not know a cup from a sieve? You laugh to yourself. Oh, but listen! *You do* know *this* kind of a cup from *this* kind of a sieve. You can see them, and touch them, and use them. There are other kinds of cups and sieves, however, which perhaps *you* get mixed up, bringing a sieve when a cup is the only sensible thing. Let us think of those others.

What is your mind, a cup or a sieve? Here are your father and mother, your teachers and school books, and your Church and God. All of them give you the water of true living, the Water of Life. If your mind is a sieve, it doesn't hold a bit of that Water. All of it is lost to you. Your sieve may be Inattention. You don't listen or care when others are pointing out the best things they know. As the saying runs, "Everything goes in one ear and right out the other." You have brought no cup. The cup is Attention. What has become of it?

I WANT MY MIND TO BE A CUP FOR THE WATER OF TRUTH, NOT A SIEVE.

Promise yourself to be careful and make no mistake. Do you see what sorts of cups and sieves there may be, other than silver or tin ones? Your mind can be either, and so can your heart.

I suppose you all have times when splendid desires steal into your hearts; times when the feeling of what you would like to be makes you tingle all over. "I will be generous," "I will be truthful," "I will be brave," "I will be cheery," "I will be helpful," you say to yourself. And that possibility warms and thrills you! You make a quick promise to yourself while you are in the mood. You really intend to keep it, too. But pretty soon your temper catches you unexpectedly, or something goes wrong, or something you very much want for yourself is wanted too by your brother—and what has become of the good intention you had? Wasn't your heart just a sieve for good intentions, so that they all just slipped

26 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

through? You didn't bring the cup that held all of them safe and made them a part of your character, the Water of Life to your will.

I WANT MY HEART TO BE A CUP FOR THE WATER OF GOOD INTENTIONS, NOT A SIEVE.

Don't let the good resolutions slip and the fine feelings come to nothing! Catch them in the cup of your heart!

One even greater thing to end with.

Once upon a time there lived One whom we call Jesus the Christ. That name Christ, you know, means One who makes all the difference in the world with our lives—a Saviour. The whole world was thirsty for Him. Your life and mine are thirsty for Him too, whether we realize it or not. Can you hold Him in your life? Or doesn't it make any *real* difference to you that He lived? Is your whole life a cup or a sieve for Him? Christmas comes now before very long. Are we going to bring a cup or a sieve for His gift of Himself? Can we hold God and Christ, or shall we lose them? I know which I hope.

WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE OF THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY. But he will have to bring himself like a cup, not a sieve!

The Fourth Sunday in Advent

[A picture of Santa Claus and
one of Christ, adult.]

SANTA CLAUS AND JESUS

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”—Acts xx. 35.

CHRISTMAS is almost here. We are all eager to get to it, aren't we?

Have you sometimes seen railroad crossings where great gates are swung closed and stop those on the road for a moment until the danger of the train is over? Well, I want to be like railroad gates that close just for a minute, making you stop and think until the danger is past, as you go down the road to Christmas. For there is danger. Not to your bodies, but to your characters. Even on the road to Christmas. “Stop, look and listen,” then, just a moment or so.

Christmas is what day? . . . Yes, the birthday of Christ. But there is another figure that Christmas suggests—good, jolly old Santa Claus. May I ask you to ask *yourselves* a very careful question and to answer it honestly? The question is, “Which do you think most of at Christmas-time, Christ or Santa Claus?” *There* is the danger, dear youngsters! Do you think more about Santa Claus or about Jesus Christ at present? Santa Claus is only a kind of a fairy, of course; and Jesus is real; but so far as your

28 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

thoughts go, hasn't the fairy-saint more interest than the Christ-child?

Perhaps there is no danger with you at all. I may be all wrong with you; but I've known many, many boys and girls who were thinking more about Christmas presents than they were of the Christ-child. Perhaps you can see how dangerous the danger is, as I go on. We don't want Christmas to get wrong end round.

It is all right to believe in Santa Claus if you find out his *heart*. The happy fairy-grandfather who loves to make children happy, who just can't help giving presents to carry his love, who is glad only when he can make others glad—this is a fine idea to keep in our imaginations. It is like Jesus' words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." But how about you and me when Santa Claus gives to us? Do we sit down and only enjoy the presents? Or can he give us some of his *heart*, so that we want to be Santa Claus to some one else? The lovable old fairy will be happiest if he has made *you* want to give *too*, not only to get. (I am not saying, please, that it is not ever so pleasant to get presents; I am only saying there's something even still better: the giving!) *And just as you get the giving heart*, you look at Santa Claus and see a change take place in him too. Out of the picture of him, another shines through.

See, here is a picture of Santa Claus. *If you have caught his secret of happiness*, look at it hard with the eyes of your heart. He stands there, dressed in red, with the holly-wreath on his head,

a Christmas-tree over his shoulder, white-bearded, smiling-eyed. The old picture does not disappear; a new one is shining through, as if from beneath. The red cloak is really blood-stained, you suddenly see; the holly-wreath covers a crown all of thorns; under the Christmas-tree green is a big wooden cross; the white beard turns brown; but the eyes do not change. Behind Santa Claus is Jesus joyfully carrying His cross. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," He reminds you! That is the truth behind Santa Claus, then; the truth of Jesus Himself all the time. "He that hath eyes to see, let him see!" If you and I can see Jesus our Master of Love behind the imagined figure of Santa Claus the gift-giver, we are safe; for Christmas will bring us true happiness.

But if we do not understand Santa Claus, we may lose the chance to know Christ's heart as well. *There* is the danger on the road to Christmas. Behind the Christmas-tree is the cross: behind Santa Claus, Christ! God let us see them there as the secret of happiness. "It is more blessed to give than to receive!"

II

CHRISTMAS SERIES

“THE CHRIST-CHILD COMES”

THE DOOR OF THE HEART

“ Behold, I stand at the door.”—Revelations iii. 20.

CHRISTMAS DAY ! When the Christ-child came to us—and comes !

Long ago they had a kind of Christmas fancy that the Christ-child comes to earth again each Christmas Eve, and wanders through the streets, looking for some one who will recognize Him and take Him in. Through the wintry, dismal night He trudges, cold and homeless (so the story runs), peering in at the windows where evergreen wreaths and warm hearth-fires make a happy Christmas family—wandering and wandering on and on ! (For sometimes even in our very happiness we forget most the some one else who has not what we have. We do not mean to be selfish in our joys, but sometimes they catch us thinking less of others than we should !) At the last, of course, some one will see the dim face outside the window-pane, and fling the door wide in welcome !

I want to take this fanciful story for our Christmas thought, and ask you to stand with the Christ-child by and by at the door that will open for Him. Look at that door ever so hard, with eyes that do not only see things as they seem, but as they *mean* ! What does that imagined door look like that is presently going to open for Him, so that He may come in out of the cold night of selfishness into the warmth of home-love ?

34 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

I want you not only to look at the door of Christmas welcome, but also to look hard at that Christ-child, and see if, after all, He is not the *Self-you-ought-to-be*? That is the blesseddest thing we can learn, that the Christ-child for us now-a-days is the *Self-we-ought-to-be*. You look at the door of Christmas welcome from behind His eyes because the *Self-you-ought-to-be* and He are one !

Here is that mysterious door, and you and I outside it in that Christ-child-self. What of the door?

First of all, it has a step before it. (I draw it here.) That is not so strange, to be sure; but for what is the step before any door? To get us high enough to reach the latch. Up from the ground-level of the dusty road. *Up a bit from the common things to open the door of the uncommon.* Let us come closer to the step. For there are words on it that show its meaning. What are they?—"I AM TAUGHT." Why, of course! All the teaching that comes to us is just a step up out of dusty, common flatness, to make us able to lift the latch of something better. It brings us to the door of a home in nobler meanings of living. Think of that when you go to school or to Sunday school, or when any one tries to teach you something he thinks worth knowing. You stand on a door-step, coming home where you belong, up out of the commonplace to the truth !

We stand on the wide door-step now. The Christ-child (in whose heart is our *Self-that-ought-to-be*) finds before His eyes a name-plate on the door. Now this is a kind of magic door, remember. The name-plate is a little strange. Only the last two words on

it read the same for everybody. The first words change with each one who looks (through the Christ-child's eyes). For you, the first words are your own name. For me, they are mine. For some one else, they would be his or hers. Then there follows an apostrophe and an " S " and the words " BEST SELF." " Johnny's best self," it reads for Johnny. " Elizabeth's best self," it reads for Elizabeth. The door-plate says, then, that our best self lives in this home of welcome. The best self welcomes the Christ-life.

But we are outside that door, not inside. We *can* go in, with the Christ-child-life; but *we are not our best selves yet*. We may be on the door-step of knowledge; but as yet we have not stepped across the threshold, I am afraid. Before long, let us truly hope, the Self-that-ought-to-be may enter and be the master of that house. Meanwhile, the best self waits for us and the Christ-child-power.

I AM TAUGHT
THAT MY BEST SELF

is what?

Glance again at the name-plate. I draw it here. What is its shape? Everything about this door has some meaning. The name-plate is shaped like a star, and its silver shines even in the cold night dimness. Now a star gives itself in shining. Does not the best self do the same? Does it not give itself as light, shining steadily and purely? That is the hidden meaning here. *The best self is self-giving*. That is what we are taught first of all on that door-step.

I AM TAUGHT
THAT MY BEST SELF
IS SELF-GIVING.

36 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

This is Christmas-time, and around that star-shaped name-plate of the best self hangs an evergreen wreath. So.¹ We all know the meaning of the evergreen: that God's love never fades, but is always fresh and the same. The evergreen about this name-plate has the same meaning. The best self, like God's love, will never change in its ceaseless self-giving. Let us build up our sentence a bit with this fact.

I AM TAUGHT
THAT MY BEST SELF
IS SELF-GIVING,
ALWAYS SELF-GIVING.²

We see a great many doors every day. Did you ever notice that most of them make a cross by their panelling? So does this door. The name-plate and the wreath are at the centre of the big cross in the door. There is no puzzle here. We know what the cross indicates without any long pondering. The cross is Christ's own sign of self-giving for others. The cross is likewise the sign of the best self's self-giving.

I AM TAUGHT
THAT MY BEST SELF
IS SELF-GIVING,
ALWAYS SELF-GIVING,
SELF-GIVING FOR OTHERS.

It is time we were opening the door, is it not? There is, then, a lock, a key and a latch to think of. What of them?

The lock is here.³ Around the rim of the key-

¹ Drawing the wreath.

² Pointing to the suggesting details in their order.

³ Drawing the lock.

hole are carved the words, "I ought to." The lock is the lock of our ideas of duty. Duty waits for a key to unlock it. We do not do our duty, I fear, as long as it seems only hard, obstinate and hateful. The little boy who said, "I know my duties when I find them because I hate them so," probably never did those same duties. The lock of duty needs a key before we can get past it to the best self beyond. *We must have something more than the idea of duty.*

Where is the key? The Christ-child-life holds it in His hands already. He brings it with Him whenever He comes. The Self-that-ought-to-be always carries it too. Made of gold, set with jewels, it fits any duty-lock the Christ-child-life tries. And the words engraved on its handle are these, "I want to" When you put "I want to" into "I ought to," duty unlocks and becomes happiness.¹ "I want to" is the Christ-child-life's magic key. If you and I can *like* to do our duties, they become gladness, and almost do themselves!

The lock is, "I OUGHT TO."

The key that unlocks it is, "I WANT TO."

What is the latch? ²

The door is unlocked, but we cannot swing it open until we do the last little thing—lift the latch. We can do it easily enough, but it *has* to be *done*. The latch is enough to hold the door shut. So we look closer to see what the latch-meaning is. And there are the words, "I will!" Yes, it makes no difference how much we know we *should* do a thing, and how much we *would* do a thing; until the magic something inside us that says, "I will," says it, we

¹ Drawing the key.

² Drawing the latch.

38 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

do not *do* it. *We have to decide.* We do not do anything until we *do* it! Thus to "I ought to" and "I want to" must be added "I WILL!"

When the door opens we remember the two hinges.¹ Two hinges, not one—for one hinge will not carry a door, least of all this one. The hinges together work to and fro, that at last we may enter in. What are they? They are the two hinges of character. On one is cut the words, "Be good," and on the other, "Do good." We cannot *be* good unless we *do* good, nor *do* good unless we *are* good. The one depends on the other. Being good and doing good are neither of them possible alone. It takes both to make the door of the best self swing open, either to let in the Christ-child-life, or to send out the best self into the world to do its work. "DO GOOD" and "BE GOOD" together, then.

Will you see what you have built up now by these meanings?

I AM TAUGHT
THAT MY BEST SELF
IS SELF-GIVING,
ALWAYS SELF-GIVING,
SELF-GIVING FOR OTHERS.
I OUGHT TO,
I WANT TO,
I WILL
BE GOOD
AND DO GOOD.

The door opens! The warm, bright room welcomes us—and the Christ-child-life! It is the inside of a great heart! On the walls burns the single word "LOVE" in letters of light. Here it is the best self

¹ Drawing the hinges.

waits for the Christ-child-life and the Self-that-ought-to-be to come in and find themselves at home. The Christ-child has shown us His loveliness; the best self has flung the door wide to His touch. For *Christ's sake* we will try to "make our hearts His dwelling-place." Will we not? Let our hearts speak in our saying:—

I AM TAUGHT
THAT MY BEST SELF
IS SELF-GIVING,
ALWAYS SELF-GIVING,
SELF-GIVING FOR OTHERS.
I OUGHT TO,
I WANT TO,
I WILL
BE GOOD
AND DO GOOD
FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

God being my help !

The Sunday After Christmas

[*A picture, if possible, of Della Robbia's Swaddled Child bas-relief. Or the picture of an Indian papoose.*]

SWADDLING CLOTHES

"She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes."—St. Luke ii. 7.

MOST of the Christmas pictures we see of the Christ-child and His mother are not quite right, for they show the baby Jesus with His arms and His feet free to move as He will. That is the way we treat babies now-a-days, giving their little hands all the chance to wave and their little feet all the chance to kick that they want. But in days long ago and far off in the Holy Land they had different ideas. A mother used to take long bands of cloth and wind them around and around the little body, tying the arms down to the sides and fastening the feet and knees to each other so that the baby could hardly move! They called these bindings swaddling clothes or swathing bands. If, then, we had a picture of the Christmas manger which was like the story, we should see the Christ-child all bound up in swaddling clothes, not free and active.

Here is the picture of a swaddled baby. The Indian papoose and the baby of Palestine were treated almost alike. But I imagine the poor babies did not like it. Would you, yourself? The mothers felt sure that swaddling clothes would keep arms and legs straight and strong; but I imagine what-

ever strength came, came by pushing and pulling and straining to loosen those tight bandages. Don't you feel so?

Now the Christmas hymns tell us that the Christ-child was not only born in Bethlehem long ago, but is born in a way in our hearts too, whenever we honestly try to do better. Christ is your best self.

O Holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray!
Cast out our sin and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.

But your Christ-self is only a *baby* Christ-self. Your best self is not full-grown. It needs the chance to grow freely. We must nurture it; strengthen it; help it to completeness of power. Do we do it? Or do we bind it in swaddling clothes—the swaddling clothes of selfishness, perhaps. Then the Christ-self cannot use its hands, for we have tied them by tight thoughts of our worst self; the Christ-self cannot learn to walk on errands of love, because we have shackled its feet close with our unwillingness to be as fine and as tender-hearted as we know we might be if we actually tried.

Here is a poem I found the other day that tells about the swaddling clothes we fasten about the Christ-self in us :—

THE HINDERED CHRIST

The Lord Christ wanted a tongue one day
To speak a word of cheer
To a heart that was weary and worn and sad,
And weighed with a mighty fear.
He asked me for mine, but 'twas busy quite
With my own affairs from morn till night.

42 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

The Lord Christ wanted a hand one day
To do a loving deed;
He wanted two feet, on an errand for Him,
To run with a gladsome speed.
But I had need of my own that day;
To His gentle beseeching I answered, "Nay!"

So all that day I used my tongue,
My hands and my feet as I chose;
I said some hasty bitter words
That hurt one heart, God knows;
I busied my hands with worthless play,
And my wilful feet went a crooked way.

And the dear Lord Christ—was His work undone
For lack of a willing heart?
Only through men does He speak to men?
Dumb must He be apart?
I do not know, but I wish to-day
I had let the Lord Christ have His way.

Let us give Him His chance to increase! Let us
not bind Him fast, hindering His growth! Set Him
free in our hearts!

The First Sunday After Epiphany

*[Draw a crown, a censer and a
piece of myrrh in a napkin.]*

GOLD AND FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

St. Matthew ii. 11.

THE Epiphany time brings us the story of the Three Wise Men. They came from far away bringing their gifts. Gold and frankincense and myrrh. These gifts were not meaningless to them. They *said* something by what they offered. Do you suppose we can find out what they said by those gifts?

Gold and frankincense and myrrh. All of these were costly and precious. So costly and precious that many people have felt these Wise Men must have been kings. I like to think this was so, at least for the first one, who brought gold. For I have a picture in my own mind of a king taking off his golden crown and laying that at the Christ-child's feet. His crown offered to the One who was the greatest King of all!

A crown of gold. How well a crown-wearer would understand what it meant. For a king is not what we think, if our idea is only of power and majesty. It shows how little we know of a king if we think of him longingly because he has no need to obey and to serve. The king is the servant of all. The kingdom is not for him, but for the sake of the poorest to whom the king is the helper and guard.

44 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

The king is the trustworthy man ! His crown is the sign of his duties. He carries in his heart the happiness of every dweller in the land. He must give himself wisely to making the land safe for the children, the workers, the poor. He is the one who is *responsible* for it all. Do you suppose this may have been in the heart of the king as he laid his crown before the King of kings?—" Well I know, O little Master-to-be, that kingship is labour and care. Well I know that those whom we serve are depending on us. Well I know that a king must be trustworthy. And I have tried so to be. I have served as my conscience told me. I have lived for my people. And now I bring all my trustworthiness as an offering to Thee. For I know Thou art to be trusted above all others. I know Thy heart of love. My trustworthiness is Thine to use as Thou wilt. For I trust Thee as my people trust me."

Can't we do the same? We are not kings, probably, but we can be trustworthy. It is a more unusual thing than you guess to be a reliable boy or girl or grown-up. There are very few people you can be sure will do what they say without further jogging and prodding. To take responsibility and be worth it, that is a pretty fine thing. Can your father and mother count on you? Can your chums know ahead of time that you will, of course, do the thing you have said you would? Can you be trusted to put a thing through without coaxing? I hope so. If so, the Christ-child will gladly count it your offering to Him. For He is faithful too. He can be trusted. He is the best of all rulers, because He helps all His children.

TO THE CHRIST-CHILD WE BRING OUR GIFTS;
THE GOLD OF TRUSTWORTHINESS.

Frankincense. What is that? Pure gum from a certain Arabian tree, which when burnt gives off a sweet-smelling smoke. Ever since history began it has been more or less used to go with prayers and with praises. It has made people think of God. It has *seemed* like prayers rising. This is probably what the second Wise Man meant by his gift. He prayed to the Christ to help him and teach him. Let us think of prayers, however, not as requests and as begging. Let us think of them partly as *promises* on our side. We want God to help us in the things we are trying to do and to be. We promise Him we will do our share, and then we know He will do His. Is not one of the reasons why we feel prayer is sometimes without God's answer because we have made no promise in our prayer first? I want you to think of that to-night when you kneel down for your prayers: "Am I promising anything to God as a part of my prayer? Am I bringing my own trying into my prayer?"

The second gift has a promise in it, I am sure.

TO THE CHRIST-CHILD WE BRING OUR GIFTS;
THE GOLD OF TRUSTWORTHINESS,
THE FRANKINCENSE OF PROMISE.

And the myrrh of what? Myrrh is bitter. It is another precious gum, and was always used to wrap in the coverings of those who died. Perhaps the bitter taste of the myrrh seemed right for their pain of heart. But I am sure the third Wise Man had a bigger meaning than that. Some Christians have

felt sure he had an idea of the Cross by and by, when Jesus should give His life for our lives' sake. Even if this is so, the Wise Man must have had some meaning too for himself. That he was ready to be unselfish, no matter how bitter-tasting unselfishness might be for the minute. Unselfishness, which is, as I have already told you, and shall tell you many times again, a death of the selfish self. Which is not pleasant for that selfish self. Will we not do as the third Wise Man?—Bring the gift of unselfishness to the Christ-child?

TO THE CHRIST-CHILD WE BRING OUR GIFTS :
THE GOLD OF TRUSTWORTHINESS,
THE FRANKINCENSE OF PROMISE,
THE MYRRH OF UNSELFISHNESS.

And then He smiles !

SNOWFLAKE STARS

“Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?”—
Job xxx. 22.

HAVE you ever heard the story of the little boy who found that snowflakes are all star-shaped, and exclaimed that it was snowing stars? There they were on his coat sleeve, every one a perfect, tiny star, just the size the stars look in the clear night sky. He thought he had stars now by the thousand, and was quite radiant and gleeful—until the little stars melted and left only drops of cold water.

I have seen a great many snowstorms, but never yet have I grown weary of close looking at the endless variety and beauty of the tiny star-crystals that come floating or whirling down out of heaven as if the Milky Way had dropped down about us. How is it with you? And never yet have I seen two snowflakes alike. When a stamping machine in a jewellery shop punches out ornaments, the basket may hold beautiful things, but they are all copies of each other. You would not want to spend time looking them over. One is enough to tell what all others are. But the snowflakes are not stamped out by any machine, all the *same*. There is not one copy of another to be found. Yet every snowflake is a six-pointed star. The main lines are unchanging. The snowflake *idea* is one. The star-shape is used in them all.

48 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

As I stand sometimes at a great railway station and watch the crowds of people go hurrying to their trains, I wonder how God must see the whole worldful of humans. Must it not be like the snowflakes in the snowstorm, all alike in the general lines, yet no two alike in the shape of character that is made on those lines? How wonderful it would be if we might think that the star-shape stood for right principles with us all! (That is as it *should* be, you will agree.) Then the uncopying beauty that makes us all different would be that of fine character only. The straight lines of the star *may* stand for the Christ-life. Along the lines of what He was we can find the selfhood that is what it should be. No one of us should copy another. Each one should make what he can of himself for himself by himself. As it seems right to each heart, so let that person do. No boy or girl wants to be any one but himself or herself. And there is only one of a kind! So don't try just to copy in *little* things any one at all, no matter how much you admire them. Keep the star-shape of the great principles and use them as you think best yourself! You alone can make your own self!

One thought more. The making of snowflakes. Up in the cloudy spaces overhead floats the dim mist. It is just a fog. Nothing is clear; nothing is definite. Then comes the good clean cold of a winter wind. Every atom of moisture in that mist is made into a snowflake, frozen into beauty and form. The cold has minted white crystals. Down they float to the earth. Is not that the way any

beauty of character is made? We are like the mist : we have dim longings, vague hopes, foggy desires. Then comes the clean cold of something hard to be done, and it takes those foggy ideas and makes them clear. The mist disappears, and we know our duty, our power. We find we can do what is needed. We take hold of the task, and before we know it it's done. The cold of the difficult thing has "dared" us into strength. You may not understand it yet, for hard things seem cold and wintry to you. But soon you will be able to look back and discover that it was the hard things you shut your teeth and *did* that make you worth while. Remember the snowflake-stars when the hard thing (whatever it may be) comes to your misty desires to amount to something in the world.

OUT OF THE MIST OF POSSIBILITIES
THE CLEAN COLD OF DIFFICULTY
CAN MAKE SNOWFLAKE-STARS OF WORTH :
DIFFERENT EVERY ONE,
BUT ALL ON THE LINES OF CHRIST'S PRINCIPLES.

The snow can teach us its truths !

SAINT CHRISTOPHER

“ My grace is sufficient for thee.”—2 Corinthians xii. 9.

THIS all happened in the land of Once-upon-a-time; which means that it is a true story *inside the heart*.

The old ferryman waited at the river for those who wished to cross. He was a strong and sturdy man, for all that his hair was white. His skin was tanned by wind and rain and the sun until it seemed like leather. His bare legs showed knots of muscle, gained by many years of tramping to and fro across the fording-place. He carried travellers across on his back; he had no boat, for the current was treacherous, and the sharp rocks in the shallow stream were like great teeth. His tall thorn staff was all the help he needed.

Travellers came and went, yet none too often. The ferryman set them down and bade them good luck in their journey, and waited in his little hut for the next one who might chance that way. One morning, there came a little lad to the river edge and looked wistfully out across the swirling water to the other side. The ferryman saw him and came from his cabin, wondering what so small a child was doing here in the wilderness alone. The boy answered that he wanted to get across the river, but that he had no money to pay for the carrying

over, and he feared the strong current by himself. "Never you fear," said the ferryman, "I will put you across, and gladly. You are not a heavy load. Here, climb up on my back." The boy clambered up; the man tucked up his clothes, took his stout staff and stepped into the water. "You're as light as a feather," he laughed to the boy on his back.

But the ferryman had taken less than a dozen steps when the weight on his shoulders seemed heavier. He never had found so many sharp stones on the river bottom. Nor had the current seemed so swift. But he smiled to himself and said, "I must be getting older than I thought. We'll see whether the river can best me!" Deeper and deeper the water grew as he stepped on ahead. It pulled and whirled and tugged at his legs, at his waist. He stumbled over a jagged stone that lay just out of his usual path, cutting his foot. The staff got caught in a pocket of mud. The sky had clouded over, and the warmth of the sunshine was gone, and the cold wind whistled down the river, chilling him through. And the passenger grew heavier, heavier, heavier! "I've carried many a grown man in my time," muttered the ferryman to himself; "but never any one made of lead like this one I thought only a lad. There's something over-strange in this boy." Harder and harder it grew. "Shall I give up and turn back?" he asked of himself. It seemed so far still to the yon river bank! "No, I'll put it through," he answered within. And he did. In spite of the fact that the weight increased until it appeared he must be carrying a giant, and in spite of the wind and the rocks and the current and the

52 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

cut foot—in spite of this, his grit carried him on until the water grew more shallow and the further shore came.

At last! He crouched on the dry earth for the boy to get down. Straightening up, what was it he saw? Not the little lad, but the Christ, full-grown and mighty! “Lord Jesus!” the ferryman gasped, and threw himself on his knees. “Yes, it is I,” said the Master; “it is I you have carried.”

What was the ferryman’s name? They call him Saint Christopher, now. And Christopher means the Christ-carrier, the Christ-bearer.

Will you be a Christopher too?

When some work that seemed easy turns hard, do you give up discouraged? Oh, how many times we get discouraged! And perhaps say, “What’s the use?” or, “Let’s turn back and give up.” I don’t care what the discouragement may come from, remember Saint Christopher. If you and I “put it through” in spite of wishes that we might turn back, and at last come out on the other side of discouragement, we may find that we have been Christ-carriers too. For we shall be blessed and made strong by the weight we have borne without cowardice. Let us think of Saint Christopher whenever discouragement comes! And keep on across the river!

**The Fourth Sunday
After Epiphany**

“ SUPPOSING ”

“ Supposing Him to be of the company.”—St. Luke ii. 44.

IF Jesus had been with us at Jerusalem, would we have started back to Nazareth without making sure He was with us still? You remember the story of Jesus when He was twelve years old, do you not? When Joseph and Christ's mother started back home there were many, many other people travelling by the same road. The road was probably like a river of people the first day out, until the branching roads to other villages and towns drained off part of the moving crowd. Would you and I have gone a whole day's journey, just taking it for granted that Jesus was somewhere in the crowd and would take the right road? That is what we read in the story: “ Supposing him to be of the company, they went a day's journey.” And when at last they began to hunt He was not to be found !!! Can you imagine their feelings?

But before we let ourselves criticize we remember two things. First, that Jesus had been so different from other boys that He could be trusted ever so much more than we. And second, that we have no right to criticize even the tiniest bit until we are sure we have never done almost the same thing ourselves. “ Those who live in glass houses must not throw stones.” It is about this second thought,

54 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

that perhaps we are doing the thing we *thought* Joseph and the Virgin Mary were doing, that I want to talk a little this morning.

They had all been up to Jerusalem for the Pass-over. It was a wonderful experience. Imagine the 4th of July and Easter and Thanksgiving and Christmas all rolled into one and really celebrated only at one place in the whole nation, and you get some idea what it meant! And now they were going back to the village of Nazareth, quiet and far away. It was back to the life of the carpenter's shop and the household samenesses they set their faces. And they supposed that Jesus was, of course, somewhere in the caravans travelling back in the same direction.

What will Jerusalem stand for if we try to put this story into our own lives? Something great, something wonderful, something where we found ourselves feeling that God was, more strongly than anywhere else in our whole living. Was it for you, perhaps, when for the first time you realized what it meant that your mother and father loved you so much that they forgot all about themselves to make you happy and strong? Some time when you saw down deep into their hearts, and found they were gladdest when they were doing for you, not for themselves. And then did the thought come, "Wherever I find Love like this I have really found God, Who is Love"? Is your Jerusalem, the holiest place in your thoughts, the home-love that makes you feel a lump in your throat and a mist in your eyes all the time you are happiest? I hope this may be. If it is, may I tell you, as one who wants

to make things clear to you for your own sake and God's, that when you feel this way Jesus is standing beside you, and that the feeling you have is one He puts there?

Then what happens? You have been to Jerusalem, where the Holy of holies is. You have felt that the thing most worth doing anywhere is to live a life that loves so much that it gives all it can all the time. And you run out to play or to school *supposing* that, of course, the feeling is going to last. You start out for a Nazareth of little and usual things. You have chores to do that get pretty stupid by and by. You have to do the same things day after day. It is your carpenter's-shop-life! Do you *suppose* that, of course, the Jesus Who stood right beside you when you realized what a home *can* mean is still with you when you start with the monotonous, ceaseless round of things that are not particularly thrilling in themselves? If you *do* think so, you are likely to be surprised. For we have to make *sure* He is with us. We can never just *suppose*! We must hold Him fast by our careful memories, by our resolves not to let Him slip. We must say over and over in our hearts all the things we said there at the Jerusalem minute, when we learned the big things of our Love-life. We must make up our minds we just *will not* let the holy reverence slide out of them bit by bit. We will make sure that Jesus is with us, will we not? We will not only SUPPOSE!

The Fifth Sunday
After Epiphany
[A formal invitation.]

“ R. S. V. P.”

“ They called on the Lord, and He answered them.”—
Psalm xcix. 6.

WHEN our fathers and mothers were going to parties as “ young folks ” there was a quaint custom of invitation. Down in the lower left-hand corner of the note that “ begged the honour of their presence ” would be the four letters, “ R. S. V. P.” They do not spell any word that *we* know, do they? They are the first letters of a sentence in French, not in English. Would you like to hear how it sounds? “ *Repondez, s’il vous plait* ”—“ respond, if you please.” Every one understood what it meant.

For, you know, some people don’t answer letters very quickly. And when a party was a big one, it was perfectly natural to say, “ What difference will one more or less make, when there are so many? I’ll go if I can when the time comes. I won’t bother to write.” That’s not very polite. It’s not very thoughtful. But so many, many persons forgot to answer that it grew quite the regular thing to write “ R. S. V. P.” in the corner.

Now the whole world and the sky too have those same letters written on them. And they are for you. “ R. S. V. P.,” says your family. “ R. S. V. P.,” says your Church. “ R. S. V. P.,” says your

nation. "R. S. V. P.," says every bit of history. "R. S. V. P.," says the sad world of to-day. "R. S. V. P.," says the sky. "R. S. V. P.," says Christ. "R. S. V. P.," says our God. Respond, if you please! Don't stay silent when everything is an invitation to you to come and enjoy and to help.

There are numberless "R. S. V. P.'s" for you and me. But I have only the moment for one. We finish, to-day, the Epiphany Season and, with its going, step out of the Christmas idea until next winter. At the bottom of Christmas is "R. S. V. P." We have thought of the Christ-child as a gift to our lives by God, Who is Love. We are to think of Him, too, as *God's invitation* to come close to His own life. An "R. S. V. P." is at the end of that word of welcome to us.

Christ came. Have we answered with gratefulness, gladness and promise? Have we responded to Christ by saying to God in our daily lives, "Thank you ever and ever so much, dear God. I will come to you, as you ask me to come"? We cannot leave an invitation unanswered. Christmas is an invitation from God. "R. S. V. P.!!" Respond, if you please!!!

III

LENTEN SERIES

DISCIPLINE AND DISCIPLE-ING

Septuagesima

[*A sword, the hilt of which,
upturned, makes a cross.*]

THE MARK ON HIS FOREHEAD ¹

“Signed with the sign of the cross.”—The Baptismal Office.

I

ONESIMUS rubbed his eyes and slowly sat up. His back ached from the stone bench on which, through the long night, he had twisted and turned with only the stolen cloak for a pillow. He looked vaguely around the prison room. The faint light of the morning made it look just as bare and cheerless as had the flickering torch of the jailer the night before. The jailer had been so sleepy he had not bothered to chain him, but there, hanging from a bolt on the wall, was an ominous belt and chain. Onesimus groaned, partly because he felt a twinge in his side, but more because there had flashed on a sudden through his mind the thought of what awaited him. He crumpled into a heap on the bench, his face to the wall, and covered his head with the cloak, as if to hide from his thoughts. It was in vain, though; try as he would, the scenes of his discovery flashed before him.

Everything had gone so well until last night. He rubbed his forehead and angrily cursed the scar that would not quite blot out; that brand that

¹ Reprinted by permission from *Warfare*, published 1916 by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of America.

proclaimed him a slave. He had thought that it had become so faint (he had been branded when only four years old) that, with a head-band covering it, he could safely run away and join the legion.

How he had wanted to be a soldier! Ever since that day when a Roman legion on its way to Asia and conquest had swept down the white road past Philemon's farm, the thought of the flashing armour and the tanned faces and the power of a great fighting array had possessed his mind.

His plans to realize his desire had been made for months; he had not believed that they *could* fail. But now——! He had escaped from Philemon's so easily with the stolen money and cloak; he had got through all his adventures so well—the scheming, thieving, begging, or even at times earning; and then he had nerved himself so coolly to go to the booth in the Forum where legion soldiers were being enrolled! After all this, to have the centurion reach up and whip off his head-band, this had been an overturn of fortune too cruel to be endured. And now the centurion was probably having the list of escaped slaves searched, in order to identify him by the brand on his forehead. And when they had done this he must go back and become a slave to Philemon once more! A slave! When he had planned to become a soldier and march about in glittering armour, a member of those glorious legions which served the great god Mars.

He felt under his tunic to see if he had lost the little image of the god of war which he wore on a cord around his neck. It had become his most

precious possession. It helped him to be a worthy follower of Mars the Mighty; to maintain a spirit of bravery; an attitude of masterfulness and crushing relentlessness.

To be a soldier of Rome, to serve Mars and grind the nations under heel—that was his vision! As compared to it, how he hated all weakness and cowardice! Philemon, his master, had been a weakling! His religion was weak and cowardly. His Christ, crucified with all that shamefulness that Rome could heap on those it scorned, was pitiable beside the armoured, glorious god of war! How could a real man worship any god but Mars?

But what was the use of thinking about these things? He had that before him which would require all the courage he could muster up. For he would probably be tortured on the rack soon, or scourged, until he told who was his master! The gods of iron give him strength not to be a shrieking coward! With his clenched fists he struck savagely at his branded forehead.

II

Presently Onesimus realized that for some time there had been talking in the courtyard. He listened dully without stirring. But suddenly, at the sound of two words, he sprang up—he must see who it was that had said them. The two words (how he hated them!) were “Christ Jesus”!

He tiptoed out into the passage-way and peered around the heavy doorpost at its end. There sat two men, one a member of the Pretorian guard,

with dented breastplate and helmet, and a short sword at his belt; the other a prisoner, chained by the waist to the guardsman. The second man was short, a little stoop-shouldered, and weather-beaten. The fire in his eyes contrasted strangely with his grey hair and beard and deeply-lined face. His was the countenance of one scarred by adventure, not by age. With flying gestures his callous hands were emphasizing his impetuous words. He was evidently a Jew, although he was now speaking in Greek to the soldier, who had to listen to him, since, being chained together, neither could free himself from the other's company. The soldier, however, was watching his enthusiastic prisoner with a kind of fascination, and seemed to be listening thoughtfully to all that he said.

Presently the guardsman asked a question:—

“ You say, then, that this Jesus was crucified because He was strong and brave? ”

And the eager answer came:—

“ Yes; because the weakness of God is stronger than men, and because it takes a real hero to do what He did. He was the real soldier, and the cross was the battlefield on which He won the great victory. And now do thou, my son, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

The soldier sat in silence for a moment; then he said, as if to himself, “ If this is true, He fought a better fight than any of us soldiers.” Thereat he sat upright and said impetuously, “ Yes, He was a good fighter, O Paul of Tarsus! ”

“ Paul of Tarsus! ” Onesimus felt the blood pound in his ears, since that was the name of the

man from whom had come the religion of his owner Philemon. "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Those were the words he had heard this Paul of Tarsus utter—what did they mean? Had he been wrong all along in thinking that the biggest and bravest thing in the world was a glittering, strutting soldier? He must think. Slowly back to his bench he crept, lost in thoughts so new to him that he was as one dazed. The next day and the next and the next he returned to listen to the words of the prisoner who preached a new kind of soldiering. It was not his argument only that held Onesimus entranced, but his earnestness and vehement confidence. To see him there, chained to his guardsman (which must mean that he was condemned to death), telling the meaning of the life the Christ had given to him; telling how Christ is the best of all captains, and Christian soldiery the best of all warfares—to hear him saying these things and to see that, though he was a condemned prisoner, he acted like a conquering hero—such things soon won over the runaway slave, and he became a regular listener at the feet of Paul of Tarsus.

III

It was a month later. Onesimus, vigorously striding along the Roman road, was nearing Philemon's farm. Far behind him across the hills and valleys and mountains and seas lay Rome, the city of power—and a certain soldier of Christ.

Onesimus raised his hand to the faint scar on his forehead, and smiled as he remembered how Paul

had covered it with another sign; how, with water held in the helmet of the guardsman, the man in bonds had marked his forehead with the sign of the cross, and made him a soldier of Christ. And now here he was going back to Colossae, a legionary in a very different army from that in which he had hoped to enroll when he ran away. But—ah! he was a wiser man now. He now knew that there was more bravery in what he was doing than there was in all the wielding of swords which comes to the lot of a legionary. As he had trudged over the hills and valleys that led to Philemon's—and servitude once more—he had kept saying to himself, over and over again, “Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

In his scrip he carried a parchment letter whereon, in irregular characters, the stiff fingers of the tent-maker had told Philemon why Onesimus was coming back to him. And he himself was going to tell his master that his one desire now was to help and serve and reveal the Saviour to his brethren.

The sunset-moment was near. The servants of Philemon were coming in across the fields, driving the oxen with their loads of wheat and grapes. The watch-dog chained beside the outer gate barked furiously at the newcomer, but changed his tune and leaped boisterously upon him as soon as he recognized him.

As he entered the courtyard where the cool fountain splashed, a fellow slave, thunderstruck at his appearance, cried out, “Are you Onesimus, the runaway?” And then, reassured, his tone turned to one of sneers, as he called to the other slaves

within, "Come, see our brave Onesimus, who ran away to be a soldier!"

With jeering and laughing they gathered about him and mocked him, and asked him in jest how he liked being a soldier. Whereat, to their astonishment, he replied, "I am a soldier, but not of the legion."

"Where is your armour, then?" they threw back at him.

"I fight not with sword and shield," he returned; "but I am fully armoured for battle, nevertheless."

"Have you your papers of enlistment?" came from the crowd. "You will need them when you meet Philemon."

Onesimus held out the letter which Paul of Tarsus had given him, and said, "Here is my commission in the army of the One True God."

"But are you really a soldier, Onesimus, or still just a servant?" asked a little boy. "And if you are a soldier, what do you wear to show it?"

And Onesimus, stooping down, said to the child, "Little lad, I am both a servant and a soldier, and on my forehead is that which shows the kind of a soldier that I am."

LIONS, THEN GIANTS¹

“A lion and a bear.”—1 Samuel xvii. 34.

THE story of David and Goliath is much like the fairy story of Jack the Giant-Killer. But there is one fact that makes all the difference in the world between the two, and leaves Jack the Giant-Killer only make-believe, but *David* the Giant-Killer true to life. Jack the Giant-Killer never seemed to need *training*. Every bit of his skill was magic. David *earned his* skill. Do you remember what he told King Saul when King Saul said to him, “You are not big enough to fight Goliath”? David answered (and this is my text for you to-day), “Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion and a bear and took a lamb out of the flock, and I went out after him. . . . Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. . . . The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” (Read the story for yourself this afternoon in 1 Samuel xvii.)

First lions and bears, you see, and then the giant! David had really been in training to fight Goliath all the time he had been watching his father’s sheep up in the Bethlehem hills, and driving off

¹ This is suggested by one of Mr. Spurgeon’s sermons.

the prowling animals that came to steal. He had got ready for his biggest battle in smaller ones, before he dreamed how his skill with the sling was by and by to be used.

First lions and bears, then Goliath, I said. But it is easy enough to guess that David did not even begin with the lions and bears. With a sling, something like this,¹ we can be sure as a smaller boy he was always practising. He must have tried it first on the daisies and tall-standing weeds. Then on the squawking ravens who swooped down to pull up the new-planted corn. Then on the fox that came gliding up the gully toward the chicken brood. Then on some slinking dog after the mother hen. It was a proud day when at last his father said to him, "David, my lad, you are so sure with your sling that I'm going to let you guard the sheepfold, now that your brothers have gone to the war. I know you can keep the flock safe from all harm." The lion and the bear were his greatest enemies so far. His heart must have thumped hard when he saw them snatch up a lamb and make off. But he reminded himself that it was just as easy to hit a lion as it was a distant daisy, which he could now do without fail, and he tightened his belt, whirled his sling and let fly the stone straight to its mark. So he got ready for Goliath before he knew there was such a giant anywhere. But when Goliath came he was ready!

Are we ready, too? We don't know what Goliath we may have to fight some day. Are we in training? Is our sling sure, as we try it out on

¹ Showing the sling.

less important but more present things? By and by we must get to giant-killing; that is our grown-up task. The giants of the great wrongs in the world will confront us all some time. We shall have our chance to do something really fine in the world. But we shall not be able to do it unless even now we are practising on the chances we have where we are. We are, perhaps, at some kind of a sheepfold even now. The sheepfold of school duties. The sheepfold of home helpfulness. The sheepfold of truth-telling or temper-keeping. The sheepfold of youth.

Shall we not promise ourselves to keep our sheepfold safe from its dangers, no matter how unimportant it seems and far from the battle-front of the great world? The lions and bears can be driven off by the skill we have gained in things even smaller. But by and by will come some Goliath-battle which God Himself needs us to win. And we want to be able to say, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, He shall deliver me now by my sling and the skill I have learned in smaller things."

Therefore, let us learn this splendid sentence, which has in it the lesson we want to remember :—

"WHATSOEVER THY HAND FINDETH TO DO, DO IT WITH ALL THY MIGHT."

Quinquagesima

[If possible, *Holman Hunt's picture*
of the Scapegoat.]

THE SCAPEGOAT HABIT

“For a scapegoat.”—Leviticus xvi. 10.

“EVERYBODY’S queer but thee and me,” said the old Quaker to his best friend; “and even thee’s a little queer.” Is that the way we sometimes feel, as we hear of strange customs here and there? Yet surely there is not a much more strange custom anywhere than we read of in the Old Testament, of how the Children of Israel in the wilderness thought they got rid of all their faults for a year by a Scapegoat. At a most solemn time they brought out an unfortunate goat, and while it was held for the High Priest, he laid both his hands on its head and confessed over it “all the iniquities of the Children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and then they let the poor scared beast tear off into the wilderness and get lost. They called it their Scapegoat—or *escapegoat*; for they believed that as the goat escaped he carried off with him all their sinfulness and they escaped their evil!

It seems a queer idea, doesn’t it? For you and I know perfectly well that whatever wrong we do is not possibly to be put on the head of some frightened “beastie” and lost. When we do things we ought not to do, and do not do things we ought to do, we have to earn our good character back by hard

work. We have to erase the wrong *with the right*. We have to be sorry and outgrow the fault. We can't use a Scapegoat when we have done the thing our conscience told us we shouldn't. We are to blame, and we have to square things again.

But, as you already have discovered, I know, there are things *inside* our lives that are really the same in meaning as some things outside. Perhaps there are Scapegoats in our thoughts and our feelings. I mean ways in which we try to escape the responsibility for the wrong we do. Let us think of a few.

First—WE LIKE TO THINK EXCUSES ARE REASONS; BUT THEY ARE NOT. They are two very different things.

For instance, if I were late to service this morning because I had been to London over-night and something happened to the locomotive five miles from London, so that the train was four hours late—which is it, an excuse or a reason? . . . Yes, a reason, of course; for I absolutely couldn't help it. I was not in any way to blame. It was just misfortune, that's all. But if I have a bad temper, and it keeps me cross and irritable, it is only an excuse for me to say, "I was born with this bad temper, and it has always been too strong for me." It is an excuse, and it is an untruth at the same time to give it as a reason, *for I am to blame myself*. Or again, I say, "I really can't give the money to this Poor Fund, for I need it for candy." That is not true; the excuse simply says, "I'd rather have the candy than help the poor." *I could choose what I would do. An excuse is an attempt to make a reason where there*

isn't any. And an excuse is a Scapegoat. EXCUSES DO NOT EXCUSE !

Lent is coming. It is the time when we surely should examine ourselves and try to conquer the faults that we find, not excuse them. Let's watch ourselves. Then we shall see. We are caught in the wrong (and down deep in our hearts we probably know it), and what is the word that comes at once to our lips? "Because"! "I was not really to blame—because." Scapegoat! Scapegoat! The excuse we think will excuse us—but will not!

WE OURSELVES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT WE ARE; NO ONE ELSE !

No Scapegoats will help. Let us beware of the Scapegoat habit, and, seeing ourselves as we are, make ourselves better.

WE LIKE TO THINK EXCUSES ARE REASONS; BUT THEY ARE NOT.

EXCUSES DO NOT EXCUSE.

WE OURSELVES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT WE ARE; NO ONE ELSE !

Ash Wednesday

[On a drawing board pin a sheet of paper with three crosses cut out but for points of attachment; which cross-portions can be successively pulled out, leaving black, purple and yellow paper visible beneath.]

THREE CROSSES

“Not my will, but Thine be done.”—St. Luke xxii. 42.

THERE were three crosses on Calvary the day Christ was crucified. There are still three kinds of crosses for us to know of, and choose one among them. All three depend on the feeling we have in our hearts if we have to say, “Not my will, but Thine be done.” This little sermon is on “Not Having Our Own Way.” We cannot have our own way in either of three different moods; it all depends on ourselves which cross on Calvary we take for our pattern.

For, sooner or later, we have to choose one of the three. We cannot have our own way very long in this world. (By our own way, I mean our way when we want things with something less than the best self. For usually when we insist on our own way, is it not the natural selfish self that is insisting?) The world is so full of people that every one cannot have all he wants. Our wants bump into the wants of others, and both have to give up some of the time.

With what spirit do we give up our own way when we have to?

There was the first thief on the cross; surly, angry and bitter. He snarled and cursed. He flung hard words at the other thief and at the Christ. He struggled with the soldiers; he was as hateful as he knew how to be (which was much). He was not ready to give up his own way at all. This was why they felt he must be crucified and put out of their world. He said by his actions, "Not my will, but Thine be done," *only because he had to*. He was rebellious to the end. We might call his the *cross* cross if we were to name it. Its colour should be black.

I hope none of us are in the least like this evil man. Do we hate to give in, and struggle as hard and as bitterly as we can against giving up our own way? Do we do everything we can to be allowed to do just as we selfishly please? That is obstinate selfishness; hateful meanness; spiteful hard-heartedness. And it makes it all the harder for the one who is unwilling to, but *must* give up his own way. God keep us, and may we keep ourselves from the black cross of rebellion; the cross cross!

The other thief had done wrong. But now he was sorry. The cross had taught him a lesson he needed to know. He turned to the Master and begged Him for comfort. And he found it ready for him as soon as he was ready for it. His cross was a cross of correction. He confessed his sinfulness, and started in the next part of his life with

a new heart. His cross should be here in violet, the colour of being sorry. (This is the colour for Lent, you recollect.)

This is more likely our cross than the last. When we can't have our own way, we learn our lesson. Probably we did not know best, after all. We were ever so mistaken. We needed correction. God's will (however it comes to us) was better than self-will. Lent is our time for self-correction. We would learn how to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done." Over against the black cross of rebellion, we choose the violet cross of correction.

Christ was crucified on the cross in the centre. Can we ever understand the lesson of His cross? Oh, I hope so! He wanted us to. He wanted us to choose the same one; to be "crucified with Christ," by having the same love that He had. Now Jesus felt that He was not dying at all, but *giving* His life. *What He gives, we get.* His life comes into our lives from within, to make them Christlike. *He was just going out of one body to enter the bodies of all who loved Him as their true power of living.* His cross was a cross of blessing. He forgot Himself in love for us. "What can I do for those whom I care for?" He asked. The cross of Love was the answer that came. So He gave Himself gladly, knowing God's purposes. "Not my will, but Thine be done," He said, and made His will and God's one! His is a cross of light. Shall we not choose it most of all; forgetting our selfish desires and our lower hope for our own way in the happier thrill of doing God's will? "Thy

will be done " has its place in the Lord's Prayer. Can we not make our hearts speak the same words? Not the cross of rebellion, or even the cross of only correction, but the cross of blessing and love !

The First Sunday in Lent

[*A cologne-bottle—or a drawing
of a tear-bottle.*]

THE TEAR-BOTTLE

“ Put my tears into Thy bottle.”—Psalm lvi. 8.

OVER in the oldest country in the world they have been digging from the sand many curious things that Egyptians of the far-away times once made and used. The digging brought up into the blazing sunshine thousands and thousands of queer bottles. Every one was shaped at its mouth just like an eye. If you put one to your eye it fitted close. These bottles were all of fancy glass, with rainbow shinings or scratched patterns like lace-work. Some one had once upon a time worn each bottle, perhaps on a gold chain around his or her neck. It was “ stylish ” to wear such a bottle. But what were such bottles for? Now do not laugh too much when I tell you : they were TEAR-BOTTLES ! When the lady who wore one lost her pet cat, perhaps, and cried as if her heart would break, she took the stopper out of her tear-bottle and used the bottle to catch all the tears ! She did not want a handkerchief. And when the sobbing was all over, and the pet cat was found, she held her tear-bottle to the light to see how much of tears she had collected. And she never let the tear-bottle be emptied. When it got full she bought a new one. There on a shelf she kept all the tear-bottles she had ever filled.

" See," she would say to herself, " how many sorrows I have had. There is the whole of my crying, measured up by bottlefuls. I'm sure I have more bottlefuls than So-and-so across the courtyard ! " And she would think how hard a time in life she had, when the biggest trouble she had ever had was only like a strayed pet cat or a broken ear-ring ! People with *real* troubles never have time to stop and measure their tears, you know. The tear-bottle was a kind of badge (though the tear-bottle wearers didn't realize it). It was a badge of being sorry for themselves. *They counted up the things that went wrong, but they never counted up the things that went right.*

THE TEAR-BOTTLE MEANS SELF-PITY.

Do you wear a tear-bottle, I wonder ? Oh, not a real one, like this, of course. But an imaginary ghost of a tear-bottle ? I hope not. And yet I am not *entirely* sure. Are you ever *whine-y* ? Does the whine creep out of your voice into your heart, and make all the world look a dreary, worthless world ? Or when something goes wrong, do you say to yourself, " That is a ' dare ' to me ! I'll show I can't be beaten by such a little thing as this ! " ? Or do you begin to feel that you are not treated squarely by things in general, and begin to whimper and to whine ? If you whine, you're wearing a tear-bottle, whether you know it or not. And no really brave boy or girl wears a tear-bottle. It is only the weak and the cowardly and the " cry-babies." Say this, therefore :—

THE TEAR-BOTTLE MEANS SELF-PITY.

SELF-PITY MEANS WHINING.

I WILL NOT WEAR A TEAR-BOTTLE !

Then every one will be proud of your cheeriness and character. And God will say, "Well done!" And you will find the sun coming through every cloud and shining about you! Don't wear a tear-bottle, will you? If you have one hidden anywhere, break it in a thousand pieces at once! And no matter how hard it is to do it, smile and be brave!

The Second Sunday in Lent

[*A child's Noah's Ark.*]

NOAH'S ARK

"The Lord shut him in."—Genesis vii. 16.

WHAT was the very first toy you owned, after a rattle? Wasn't it a Noah's Ark? Or did your Noah's Ark come later? At least I know you probably had one at *some* time as a little child. I have one here, into which are shut all the animals with the little family my own little girl used to call "Mr. and Mrs. Noah's." It is likely that the Bible story of Noah's Ark is almost the first one to be asked for, too. "What is this all about?" is natural, when this toy is put into the hands of the small boy or girl.

It is a very simple story, of course, but ever so full of thoughts for you and me. The wicked earthful of people, and the saving of Noah from the flood in his ark of gopher wood, and his coming out upon a clean, washed world under the rainbow to start afresh with God!—It is *so* like the story of our own life; not outside, but within. You do not see how? Let me show you if I can.

Before long the flood of the cares of life and its puzzles and worries will begin to rise. I do not want you to feel that life is all sad and grim, but it *is* flooded with possibilities of drowned souls. Many a one that we know goes down under the unspiritual

flood. They may seem to be alive, but their souls are drowning, choked by the thought of THINGS. They are not breathing GOD as they might. Oh, dear youngsters, I do not want your spirits to be in any such danger. I want you to have some kind of an Ark that will save you from smothered souls ! I do not want you to get hard-hearted ; I pray you may not grow hard-headed and sly. I know the only life is that which keeps God's love in the heart as air is in your lungs, purifying your life-blood and making you strong. The temptations are coming. In fact, they have begun. Not a one of you has not felt the first wavelets of the evil ideas about his feet. Anger, impure suggestions, things that are not quite honest, jealousy, selfishness, laziness, tattling, over-eating, hatefulness, sulking, caring *only* for " fun," cheating, quarrelsomeness, and so on and so on—these are the waves of the flood that *can* drown unless we find an Ark that will float.

I WANT TO ESCAPE THE FLOOD OF WRONG THINGS
THAT DROWN SOULS.

What can that Ark be? Why not some IDEAL? Do you know what an ideal is? I suppose you must. It is some fine idea we hold always before our minds, of what we want to do and be some day. It is a purpose that is noble, a picture our hearts warm to, of the character we promise ourselves we will make if we can. It is a decision, a choice of God. Let us call it the Ark of Steady Purpose.

SO I'LL BUILD ME AN ARK OF STEADY PURPOSE.

Now God will shut us into this Ark of Steady

Purpose if we will let Him. We will be shut in. Some things will be impossible as soon as our Purpose has us fast. I cannot be sulky, for instance, if I am shut into a purpose of cheerfulness. For cheerfulness and sulkiness just contradict each other. Or I cannot be lazy and shirk my work if my purpose is really to be of some use in the world, to be good for something to somebody. Opposites don't go together. If you or I honestly choose some big purpose, we find ourselves shut into it, so that the water of the contrary things cannot even leak in. We cannot THINK of doing some things. We are delivered from that particular danger by the decision and ideal that we have. Or that more truly *has us* !

GOD WILL SHUT ME IN AND SHUT THE FLOOD OUT.

God shuts us in—if we have built our Ark of Steady Purpose. But presently He will let us out again into a new world. We are soon to step out into a kind of life where we go freely, doing just as we like. Because we like to do only the things that are right ! Over our heads is the rainbow of a new hopefulness and happiness. All things wait for our glad liberty. We have been saved by our Ark for something better beyond. We are not bothered with the flood any more, for that is past. God bring us into this freedom by the Ark of Purpose that rides the flood of temptation so safely !

BY AND BY HE WILL LET ME FREE TO DO AS I WANT TO ; BECAUSE I SHALL WANT TO DO ONLY THE THINGS THAT I SHOULD.

84 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

Let us, to end with, say the whole story together :—

I WANT TO ESCAPE THE FLOOD OF WRONG THINGS
THAT DROWN SOULS.

SO I'LL BUILD ME AN ARK OF STEADY PURPOSE.

GOD WILL SHUT ME IN AND SHUT THE FLOOD OUT.

BY AND BY HE WILL LET ME FREE TO DO AS I
WANT TO; BECAUSE I SHALL WANT TO DO ONLY
THE THINGS THAT I SHOULD.

**The Third Sunday
in Lent**

*[The Alms Basin and some
money.]*

THE MAGIC CARPET

“ She hath cast in all the living that she hath.”—St. Luke
xxi. 4.

PEOPLE are sometimes half ashamed to mention money. Particularly when it is about anything the Church has to do. Can you understand why they should be so shy? I cannot.

Jesus was sitting in the Temple, near the great chests where those who came up to worship dropped in their offerings. It was a busy spot. And all sorts of folk were there, all making their gifts to Jehovah. Jesus was watching them as they came and went. Not always with pleasure. Here, for instance, was a rich Pharisee coming. He was proud, and liked to have others watch him at such times as this. His robe was of the very finest cloth. He wore gold rings, and carried a wonderful staff, with which he pushed out of his path those who did not move quickly enough to give him room. In his open hand, so that every one might see how much he gave, he carried some gold pieces. With a wide sweep of his arm he dropped them into the mouth of the chest; slowly, one by one. He smiled to himself as he heard the poor who stood near murmur at so much money. This was more than they earned in a year. They did not know that it

was very little for so rich a man to give, considering how much he had. He could spare it without ever missing it. But Jesus knew.

The crowd poured by. In its midst was a poor widow, wrapped close in her faded robe. She was white and thin, and her eyes were timid. She spoke to no one, but her lips moved in prayer. She tried to slip up to the treasury-chest when no one was looking to see what she gave. But the Master's quick eyes caught a glimpse of her gift—only two mites. (A mite was the tiniest coin that there was. The two together were worth less than a penny.) It was a very small gift beside the great ones that had gone before. Jesus, however, turned to His disciples and said this astonishing thing—that the poor widow had really given more than any one else! For she, out of her poverty, had given all the living that she had!

Whether He meant that she had put in every bit she could possibly spare from her little store of money, or whether He meant that she had gone without her food that day in order to give, we do not know. But we like to believe that somehow she *did* put in her *life* along with the mites, for the sake of her God. (You have heard of the Widow's *Mite*. Never make that mistake yourself. There were two mites, not one. She might have kept back one for herself, but she put in the two.) They were as much as she possibly could spare. And they showed how much she cared, not in the amount, but in the cost to herself.

Now let us take the long jump in thought that brings us to to-day and the offertory that will

presently come in this service. The Alms Basins will be passed. Will you and I put in Widow's Mites? It ought not to be an unwelcome thought to imagine Jesus watching the Alms Basin as once He watched the treasury chest. It would not make any difference to Him whether we put in pennies or a five-pound note; He cares only how much they *mean*. I can think of pennies that would be worth more to Him than a hundred-pound note. It all depends on how much of *ourselves* goes in with the money.

I don't like to talk about "pennies" to you. For I am fearfully afraid you may get into the habit of thinking only about the smallest possible offering to the Church. Pennies *may* be honest carriers of a real gift of self; they may *not* be. It is the gift of self that is made along *with* the money I think God cares about. And I feel sure as can be that money that comes with a gift of self can do more work for God in the world than much larger sums that have no gift of self with them. Money alone cannot do much; it is *souls* that get work done that's worth while.

Do you remember the fairy story of the magic carpet? The fortunate owner was able to step on to it and wish himself in any part of the world—and whisk! he was there! Money is a magic carpet too. It is no fairy carpet, either. It is the truest fact that can be. See! here is a nurse over in China, across the wide world from us. She is working this minute on the broken arm of little Hong Wu. If that nurse were not there, Hong Wu might have to go through his whole life with a

twisted right arm. He watches the nurse, and he wonders why she is here, so far from her home. She tells him because Jesus has taught her that the greatest joy in the world is to be a friend, and that she knows little Hong Wu and his people sorely need friends. Now this nurse is doing what she does, how? Just this particular hour she is being kept there, is given a roof over her head, and food to eat, and medicine to use, by the money that perhaps you have saved and put in the Alms Basin. *Then don't you see that that nurse is really you?* It is YOU who are tying up little Hong Wu's broken arm. It is *your* life that is helping his. *You are there if you want to be. If your money was given with your heart's best life along with it.* "What my money does, I myself am doing." Is not money a magic carpet? Can we not do as the Master said the poor widow did—put in all our living into our gifts, no matter how small they may be? God wants gifts of self along with our offerings. As the hymn puts it :—

All we have to offer ;
 All we hope to be,
 Body, soul and spirit,
 All we yield to Thee.

So then :—

WHAT MY MONEY DOES, I MYSELF AM DOING.

FOR GOD WANTS GIFTS OF SELF ALONG WITH MY OFFERINGS.

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

[*A sling and five stones.*]

FIVE STONES, NOT ONE

“He chose him five smooth stones out of the brook.”—
I Samuél xvii. 40.

DAVID used only one stone to kill Goliath—but he had four others in reserve. Has that ever occurred to you?

Out to meet that giant Philistine, all armed in his heavy armour, with his great spear and shield, he went, trusting in God to help him. He must have prayed that God would keep his nerves calm, his muscles true and his aim sure. He believed with all his heart that he was on God's side, and that God wanted him to win. He counted on God to help him—but he carried five stones, not one.

Does that seem out of place? Does it look as though, after all, David did not trust God? For the five stones can mean nothing but the thought back in David's mind, “The first stone might miss, and the second and the third and even the fourth. I might not be able to strike Goliath the first shot.” The five stones appear to show that David felt he had a battle coming that was going to be a real one. He felt he must do more than just go through the motions and let God do the rest. Whatever idea of God's help he had, he got ready to fight as if he had only himself to count

90 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

on. He took five stones out of the brook, not one.

But one was all that he needed. For that one went straight, and down crashed Goliath. The first stone went straight, though, because he was putting into its throwing every atom of strength and of skill that he had. He did not expect God to do it for him. It was like the proverb, "God helps those who help themselves."

I want you to take home three sentences to-day, to think of this week. This is the first:—

IT TAKES TWO TO MAKE A BARGAIN, EVEN IF ONE OF THE TWO IS GOD. God cannot do things without us. We are His living tools. If He wants some great word said, some one must let Him use his brain and his tongue. But at the same time that some one must do all he can, as if by himself. For instance, I am sure I can preach you a better sermon (which speaks for God) by working ever and ever so hard on it ahead of time and when I say it, than ever I could by getting up here in the pulpit without a single thought of what I should speak, and saying to God, "You do the work for me, please, and tell me what to talk about now." The five stones tell us that *God uses us most when we are most ourselves.*

This is the second sentence:—

IT TAKES TWO TO MAKE A BARGAIN, EVEN IF ONE OF THE TWO IS GOD.

GOD USES US MOST WHEN WE ARE MOST OURSELVES.

You see, we cannot kneel down and pray for things we won't work for too. A certain splendid man

once said, "Prayer is not a substitute for work. I can see prayer in a man buying a spade, and digging his land and planting his potatoes, but I can't see any prayer in a man sitting in a house and chanting words that potatoes may be forthcoming." Did you ever do such a thing? Not about potatoes, perhaps, but about something else. You thought God ought to drop what you wanted in your lap for the asking, when you had not earned it by work? The world doesn't run that way, we find out sooner or later. WE CANNOT EXPECT GOD TO DO FOR US WHAT WE DO NOT LET HIM DO THROUGH US. We may well keep in mind David's stones and their meaning.

IT TAKES TWO TO MAKE A BARGAIN, EVEN IF ONE OF THE TWO IS GOD.

GOD USES US MOST WHEN WE ARE MOST OURSELVES.

WE CANNOT EXPECT GOD TO DO FOR US WHAT WE DO NOT LET HIM DO THROUGH US.

Five stones—not one !

The Fifth Sunday
in Lent

“NOTHING BUT LEAVES”

St. Mark xi. 13.

FIG trees are unusual. Most trees have leaves long before their fruit comes. But with fig trees it is the other way round. Fruit comes before leaves—when there *is* any fruit.

As Jesus came up to Jerusalem one morning in Holy Week He saw at a turn of the road on ahead of Him a fig tree covered with glossy, plentiful leaves. Here it stood, where the sunshine always bathed it, and where the rivulet down the hillside watered its roots. If ever a tree had a fortunate spot in which to grow, this was it. It seemed strong and sturdy. Surely there must be much delicious fruit hanging there under the leaves.

Now Jesus was hungry. The fig tree would have something for His hunger. He came to it eagerly, His disciples following close after. But when He lifted the leaves on the branches, not a fig did He find there. There was not even a shrivelled fig hanging there from last autumn's crop. This was a barren fig tree. It made a great show, but there was no truth in it. The leaves *said* to any one who passed by, “Yes, there are plenty of figs here.” When there was not a single one. Do we wonder that Jesus was displeased at

this deceiving fig tree? It *was* an untruth. There was nothing but leaves!

Let's think a little about this leafy fig tree. For Jesus said it was like many, many people then. And I suppose the same thing is true now. His heart was hungry for their understanding and love. He wanted to feed on real fruits of loyalty. He was almost starved for their sympathy and their backing. And what did they give Him? Leaves of words that *sounded* right but *meant* nothing. Deceiving *appearances* of belief. Yet all the time they did not intend to do as they said. They were not at all behind Him. In a few days they were to crucify Him, although now they shouted, “Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” They cried, “Lord! Lord!” but did nothing that He said. And Jesus, with grief in His heart, said to His disciples, “Don't be deceived. No shouting of hosannas means anything. They are like this fig tree. There is nothing but leaves.”

Christ is still hungry at heart for real love and true faith. God is hungry too. Have we stopped to consider God's side of things? We think so much of the things that we want from Him, that it is easy to forget that God's heart is hungry for something from us. He is hungry for something other than leaves. He wants fruit of real love and true faith. I repeat. It takes careful thought, perhaps, for us to realize God's hunger. Christ's life satisfied it. Because there was in His life nothing but love put into action. God wants us to be glad in helpfulness. But unless we are helpers

of the world, it makes no difference what we say nor how loud we say it—there is nothing but leaves to our appearance of realness.

A wise man once said this sentence, which I want you to learn: "WHAT YOU ARE SPEAKS SO LOUD I CANNOT HEAR ONE WORD YOU SAY." It is practising, more than preaching, that counts. It makes no difference how well we know our Creed and our Catechism and our prayers and our hymns—unless there is the fruit of helpfulness under these leaves. Appearances do not mean anything by themselves. We must mean what we talk of. God is still hungry. We must *do* what we know is the right. We must have fruit beneath the shiny leaves of our worship and hymns. We must feed the heart of God with the fruit of trying to follow Christ's life. God is not deceived. He finds out whether there is fruit.

"By their fruits ye shall know them," said Jesus of us. God help us to be different from that barren fig tree that had nothing but leaves!

The Sunday Next
Before Easter
[A *palm*.]

THE PALM BADGE

"They took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Jesus."—St. John xii. 13.

WE call to-day what? PALM SUNDAY. The palms all about the church and to be given out as we go, tell us all over again. Perhaps you think you know the story so well that there is little more left to say. The best stories, however, can be told over and over again, for ever and ever, and something new comes out each time.

We have our palm branches to-day as the crowd so long ago along Jesus' road had its palms. But we are not imitating them. We are contradicting them, to make things right that were wrong. Palms have a certain meaning. They are another kind of words. Long ago these palms were used for Jesus lyingly, now, I hope and believe, we use them truthfully. Palms mean that the one for whom they are waved is a king, and that we will obey him. On the first Palm Sunday, the multitude waved its palms and shouted hosannas, but it was not ready at all to let Jesus be a king whom they would obey. They were, indeed, willing that He should *call* Himself a king, but they were not ready to let Him say what they should do. To-day I hope we use our palms, not only to call Him our king, but to let

Him tell us what He wants us to do. We are using the palms truthfully.

What ought the crowd of long ago to have done? Should they have thrown away their palms because they did not mean the things the palms said? Would that have been honest? Or should they have kept their palms and have made themselves mean them? There are two kinds of truth, you see. One is the kind that says only the thing we mean, and the other is the kind that makes us mean the thing we know we should say.

Now just let's suppose. Some one that you do not care for at all comes to see you. Down in your heart you are ever so disappointed to see him come up the steps. You know you are in for a stupid half-hour. You would give a good deal if you could have happened to be away when he came. You never can play with him and have any fun. What should you say when you meet him at the door? Should you tell the kind of truth that says exactly what you feel? "I am more sorry than I can say that you have come to see me. I wish you never had come. Of course, now that you are here, I suppose I shall have to make the best of it, but it's not easy or pleasant. Above all things don't stay long. And don't come again. I've had enough of you." Should you say this? I can imagine what would happen, can't you? Yet you would have told one kind of truth. *You would have brought down your words to your feelings.* And you would have been very rude.

The other kind of truth is *to bring your feelings up to your words.* You would then say the polite

thing. "Hello, my friend. Glad to see you. Come in. What can we do to be sociable?" When he goes you would say, "Come again soon." This is what you would say; but as you said it to him you would be saying to *yourself*, "Now, see here! The reason you never have liked this chap is certainly half your own fault and perhaps more. Have you ever tried to find something likeable in him? Have you ever wondered whether you understood what he intended that last time he offended you? Now see if you can't like him. Make the effort. He has something somewhere that you ought to learn by friendly companionship. I won't have you not *try* to like him. Fill the words your lips are saying with your willingness to like him. And see if you don't succeed!" That is a better kind of truth, isn't it?

Or let's suppose again. You come to church. And you are not quite in the right mood. You were hurried in getting ready, and you got out of sorts because you couldn't find the right pair of shoes. When the choir comes in, you watch to see if some one of the boys is out of tune. "As usual," you mutter. You will not sing. You don't feel like it. The service begins. When the prayers come you don't feel one bit like praying. What ought you to do? Wouldn't it be more honest to sit bolt upright and say never a word? You do not want to take God's name in vain. You can't say what you don't feel. That is one kind of truthfulness. But there is the other. You say to yourself again, "This is God's house, and you ought at least to try to talk with Him. You know

you must not let your crossness keep on. Put something better in its place. Now get down on your knees and make yourself say the beautiful words you know you ought to feel like saying. And try to mean them. See if you do not find yourself meaning them before you have gone three sentences. Lift yourself up to them. Fill them full of yourself ! ” That is the better kind of truth, surely.

If you are afraid in the dark, you whistle (if you are a boy) as if you were not. All at once you are not afraid any longer. *You have made yourself feel as you should. The feeling follows the will.*

Here are our palms, the badge of that better kind of truth. We will find just as fine things as we can anywhere, and we will lift up our lives till they fit those fine things. We will MAKE ourselves truthful in the highest possible way. Not one single bit will we let down the standard of expectation that is on us. We wave palm branches and sing glad hosannas. And, God helping us, we will make them our truth !

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS¹

"And they compelled one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander . . . , to bear Jesus' cross."—St. Mark xv. 21.

I

THE family of Simon was gathered in the upper room about the charcoal fire. It was the night on which the great promise came to the boy Alexander, and he never forgot it. The raw, spring wind which swept through the town of Cyrene made the warmth from the brazier comfortable.

Presently his father came home and climbed wearily up the crumbling stairs. As he entered the room where his family was the light from the oil lamps showed that his eyes were joyless. "I start in three days for the Passover at Jerusalem," he announced briefly. "I have asked the ship-master to save me a place. It will be the last time I shall bother to go." His wife assented, but wistfully added, "I suppose it does not pay, although it is commanded." "Commanded," responded Simon, "I know it is commanded! But what of that? Here am I, Simon the Jew, far across the sea in Cyrene, in the north of Africa. I came here to find my fortune and instead have lost my luck! We

¹ Reprinted from *How the Cross Goes Around the World*, published 1915 by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of America.

grow poorer each day; all about us men without conscience grow rich and live in palaces! I am tempted to act and live as they do; to adopt for my creed the words, ' Might makes right, and every man should look out for himself first and foremost.' Maybe, after all, religion is only a magic that doesn't work. What if I *am* a Jew and under the Law! The prophets promised that if we kept the Law God would send the Messiah and make us rulers of the world. We have had four hundred years of promises, and my patience has run out! My house is full of cracks, and dingy; my cupboards are empty; my business grows worse and worse. It is useless trying to keep on; misfortune dogs my steps; as things now are, life is not worth living!" Breathless with his complaining, Simon dropped cross-legged on a seat and held his face between his clenched fists. Alexander had often seen him thus. But his mother's reply was this time new. Wide-eyed and tense he listened. " Simon, my husband," she began, " I, too, have been discouraged. We have not found the meaning or the joy in life of which we used to dream. The Law of the Scribes and Pharisees does not seem to work. But let us give it one more chance. Alexander is twelve years old, the age at which, according to the Law, he should go up to the Passover at Jerusalem for dedication. Shall we not make him a ' Son of the Law ' this year, and see if our fortunes will change because of our offering? "

Go up to Jerusalem! How Alexander's heart beat at the thought! He had always heard of it, his dreams had pictured it as glorious beyond words!

Was he to go at last? He listened with his whole being for the answer, which seemed as if it would never come. At last his father raised his head, unclenched his hands, rose, and then grudgingly muttered, "I will see what can be done. Perhaps it may be worth the trying."

II

The hot sun of Judea beat down with blinding light. The walls and roof-tops of the city shimmered in a haze of brightness. Beneath the blaze the road from the city gate to the hill called "The Skull" seemed almost to writhe in its discomfort. Slowly along it moved a great crowd of people, shouting indistinctly. Alexander, coming in from the camp in the fields where he and his father had been staying for a week, climbed up on a rock beside the road to see what was going on. What met his eyes was the flash of armour, a sure sign that Roman soldiers were on the march. But why? What could it mean? It was no Passover procession. He would overtake his father, who had grimly gone on ahead, and ask him. But before he could do so, it became all too evident what the procession was. Three men were being led out to be crucified! Presently Simon saw his son, and pulled him hastily out of the road. It would be the worst thing possible to get mixed up with the rabble, for they both were purified as the Law directed all to be who went up to the Temple on the Passover. And this crowd was bent on work which would make him who touched it "unclean," and hence unworthy to do the very things they had

come so far to do. It was too late, however. The hooting, jeering, and in places weeping crowd had already reached them.

Suddenly the soldiers stopped, and between their ranks could be seen, prostrate on the ground, a Man whose robe was torn and bloodstained, and on whose head was a fearful crown of thorns. It was evident that He had been borne down by the weight of the heavy cross He had been half carrying, half dragging up the hill. Looking about for some one to help their victim, the soldiers saw the stalwart Simon, and seizing him, pulled him to the side of the fallen Man. What could the frantic Cyrenian do? He shrank away as best he could. But there were soldiers on all sides, armed with swords which they were only too glad to use. Submit he must.

Alexander dumbly watched the Romans enforce their will. He saw them put the cross of shame on Simon's shoulders, and saw the sad procession start once more upon the road to Calvary. He did not dare follow too closely, but he caught glimpses every now and then of his father and the Man beside him, toiling on and up. When the horror of the crucifixion came, he hid himself in a cleft of rock from which he did not venture out until the evening.

III

What a disappointment this day of days had been! Alexander dreaded hearing his father return to camp that night. He could imagine too well what Simon's angry, crushing gloom would be. A tragedy had befallen them. The Law had failed. Simon

might well now be forgiven his hopelessness. What was the boy's surprise then, when his father strode into the circle of the fire-light, with buoyant step and glowing eyes ! He lifted his wet-cheeked son from the blanket where he lay, and with his arm around his shoulders said, " Son of mine, this has *not* been a ruined day ! I have found more than I dared to hope ! Even in the horror of this crucifixion I have discovered that which my heart has sought for all my days : a Man who knew the secret of happiness. It was the Man they crucified who possessed it. I know not much about Him, except that from the gossip of the crowd I find He came from Galilee, and was a carpenter who taught strange truths. And this is what He taught : that he who gives his life for others will win God's peace for his soul ! He spoke once or twice to me, as I carried the cross beside Him, words of strange serenity and glory. They were words of joy, because He was about to die that others might have Life and know the only true God ! I watched Him die, and verily it was not death, but victory to Him. He conquered by the Cross ! I am going to search until I find His followers and learn His secret. I know already it will make all the difference in the world to me and mine."

IV

EASTER SERIES

“ALL THINGS NEW”

THE BREAD OF CHARACTER

“ I am the Bread of Life.”—St. John vi. 35.

I AM going to ask you to do something this afternoon I know you do not expect. Will you help me make bread? Oh, I do not mean to get your hands and clothes all flour and water and make “ *baker's bread.*” I am talking of a better kind of bread than that. Jesus calls it the Bread of Life. But when He talked of the Bread of Life He knew, too, how bread was made; probably ever since, as a little boy, He watched His mother putting “ leaven into three measures of meal, until the whole was leaven.” (Leaven is yeast, you know.) So perhaps He may sometimes have had the playful thought that the Bread of Character is made almost the same way. The more we think about that, the more truth appears, until we find ourselves ready to prove that *as bread is made, so is the Bread of Character!*

I have here several things that go into the usual kind of bread. But we must think of them only as helps to our reasoning about *spiritual* bread-making.

First we think of the things that go into bread. Presently we shall think what becomes of them in the bread-making.

What is bread made of? . . . Yes, I knew that

you would say flour, first of all. For bread is made most of all of the flour. Here I have a measure of flour, pure and white, and well-ground. First it was wheat. The wheat was planted in the ground in order to grow. You know this; but see how it means something new when we are considering character-bread. For planting wheat in the ground meant a kind of self-sacrifice for the wheat. Down out of the sunshine into the dark, wet earth; there to be buried until it lost all its smooth, sleek form, and all the life in it burst out in roots and green blade, and the wheat-grain itself disappeared. Jesus noticed this meaning, for He said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it falleth into the ground and die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

When the new wheat was all grown, men harvested it and threshed it. They flogged it with the heavy wooden whips called flails until all the kernels were shaken out of their casings; and then the winnowing began. Winnowing is sifting. The wind blew away the chaff, useless flakes of wheat-skin, and only the food-wheat was left. Then the wheat went to the mill and was ground. Finer and finer it was powdered between the millstones until it was flour.

The whole story of the flour so far is like Good Friday. The wheat died that you and I might live. Christ died that you and I might have food for our character! Every one who is Christian really dies, so far as selfishness goes, in every choice of what is good and unselfish. We are so anxious that others shall be fed that we give all that is in us and of

us for their sake. We choose to be generous and helpful, never thinking first of ourselves. Flour can well mean such choices. It stands for THE THINGS WE RIGHTLY CHOOSE. When I choose to do what is right, I am giving myself to something or some one. I have died to my selfishness. The planting, threshing and winnowing mean unselfishness and the sifting out of all that is useless to others. Grinding is getting the goodness out and making it ready for others.

MY CHARACTER SHOULD BE MADE
FROM THE THINGS I RIGHTLY CHOOSE.

So I put in the flour of right choices into the Bread of Character, as I put wheat-flour into the bread.

What comes next in bread-mixing? . . . Water. To be sure. And water is as simple and as usual as the air. Yet it has a deep meaning. So deep a meaning that Jesus Himself took it to explain Himself to us. "I am the Water of Life," He said.

Out in the country, high up in the hills, we find a spring of clear water, perhaps. It bubbles up out of the ground, *giving itself gladly* for our thirst and our using. It keeps itself clear by this giving of self. Another kind of generous self-sacrifice. With a meaning like the wheat. What shall the water stand for as we bring it to the making of the Bread of Character? Let us call it the Water of Meanings. Out of our every-day life we find meanings bubbling. We find certain things are true, certain are not. We learn, not by books, but by living, what is best. And the things that are true

are all of them like clear springs of happy self-giving. They come to us out of the ground; we discover them, stumble upon meanings unexpectedly. Those meanings keep pouring out more and more of themselves. They keep pure by this gift of themselves. They give all they have, all they are, for our strength. So we pour in the water of THE TRUE MEANINGS I FIND, into the Bread of Character. And we say,

MY CHARACTER SHOULD BE MADE FROM
THE THINGS I RIGHTLY CHOOSE,
THE TRUE MEANINGS I FIND.

Flour and water, however, do not make bread. How tasteless it would be without salt! We should not want to eat it. So we take up a pinch of salt and stop to think what it can stand for.

Salt is what gives tastiness, we all know.

But we remember too, I hope, that salt dissolves, and so loses itself to give that taste. It flavours, it sweetens, it preserves whatever it gives itself to. But it dies to self to give itself as pleasantness and wholesomeness and taste. Isn't it growing clearer in your minds how everything that goes into the bread gives all it is and has for our strength? There's no selfishness in flour or water or salt.

Now in the Bread of Character, I'm as sure as I can be what salt stands for. But it's not easy to explain in words. There is something in every one of us that makes us just a little different from any one else. No two leaves on a tree are just alike; no two daisies in a field; no two people's characters. God has put something into the heart of each one of us that makes us ourselves and

nobody else. I like painting and you like carpentering; I like dogs and you like cats. And so on. There are some things that you can do that I never could, no matter how hard I tried. Grown-ups call this not-to-be-matched "unalikeness," individuality. It makes you *you*, and me *me*. It is your *gift* or mine. For God has given us the power to be different, yet all the same in heart. Salt is like this; it gives tastiness. The *ourseliveness* is the salt of the Bread of Character. Let us call it our "*Gift*."

MY CHARACTER SHOULD BE MADE FROM
THE THINGS I RIGHTLY CHOOSE,
THE TRUE MEANINGS I FIND,
THE "GIFTS" I AM GIVEN.

Finally of the things that go into bread—the yeast. I am quite sure you never have guessed that yeast is actually alive. Not as you and I are alive, of course; but like some handful of tiny, tiny plant-mites. And when we put yeast into flour and water it gives its life to the flour and water. The yeast is not through with its work until all the dough is light and fluffy, *and every bit of the yeast has disappeared*. You must not even be able to taste it. It has given itself as life in the dough. Again we find Good Friday in the things that go into the bread.

Surely the yeast is like conscience. That voice inside my heart that is my bit of God's voice; that influence that is alive inside my life with a power more splendidly alive than my own life; that leaven of God's presence within my soul; this is the yeast of the Bread of Character. It is God

giving Himself to my soul so that my soul may come alive and be a Self ! The yeast in the Character Bread is *the conscience-voice that I go by*.

MY CHARACTER SHOULD BE MADE FROM
THE THINGS I RIGHTLY CHOOSE,
THE TRUE MEANINGS I FIND,
THE "GIFTS" I AM GIVEN,
THE CONSCIENCE-VOICE THAT I GO BY.

Into the flour and water and salt, we put the yeast. It is all stirred in and then kneaded. And the bread rises. There is no soggianness left. The Bread of Character is not soggy. It is light and expanded and good. We are not dull and surly and painful if the Bread of our Character has had the leaven of God. We do what we do because we *like* to, not because we must ! See the bread rise ! So CHARACTER IS MADE NATURAL.

This finishes the first part : what goes into the bread. The rest is not so long to think about, but it is just as important.

When the bread has risen, it must be kneaded again. That is, the flour and salt and water and yeast must be thoroughly moulded together. There must be no lumps of flour and no lumps of salt. The bread must be the same all the way through. So must character. We can't have a character worth having that is not the same all through. Our knowledge, our meanings of life, our individual gifts and our conscience must all be made one. They can't be allowed to be separated at all. CHARACTER IS MADE THOROUGH.

The bread then goes into the oven for the real baking. And the heat of that oven does many wonderful things. It makes the bread what it should be for food. The same things are in it before it is baked, but they all need the oven-heat to come right. And the heat of that oven for the Bread of Character is Love. It is Love alone makes Character ready for strength-giving to others. CHARACTER IS MADE LOVING.

MY CHARACTER SHOULD BE MADE FROM
THE THINGS I RIGHTLY CHOOSE,
THE TRUE MEANINGS I FIND,
THE "GIFTS" I AM GIVEN,
THE CONSCIENCE-VOICE THAT I GO BY.
WHEN MY CHARACTER IS
MADE NATURAL,
MADE THOROUGH AND
MADE LOVING

then I am ready to be given for the strength of the lives of my friends.

See, I open the oven door. I take out the loaf. I cut off a slice and place it here on this silver Communion Plate. It belongs on the altar; whither I carry it now. The Holy Communion might use it. For as bread is made up all of self-giving like the cross, so it makes strength for those who eat of it, which is the Easter Joy. As my character is made up of self-giving, so I find my new life in the new life I have given my friends. As Jesus died for us all, what He gave we now have in our lives, if we will; for He is the Bread of Character Himself. CHARACTER IS READY TO BE GIVEN TO OTHERS AS STRENGTH.

114 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

MY CHARACTER SHOULD BE MADE FROM
THE THINGS I RIGHTLY CHOOSE,
THE TRUE MEANINGS I FIND,
THE "GIFTS" I AM GIVEN,
THE CONSCIENCE-VOICE I GO BY.
WHEN MY CHARACTER
IS MADE NATURAL,
MADE THOROUGH,
MADE LOVING,

IT IS READY TO BE GIVEN TO OTHERS AS
STRENGTH.

And that is the best coming to life again any one
knows !

The First Sunday After Easter

[*A leafy, blossoming branch.*]

THE EASTER-TREE

"When the branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near."—St. Mark xiii. 28.

WE have Christmas-trees for Christmas. Why not Easter-trees for Easter? What would an Easter-tree be?

The Christmas-tree is evergreen, to show that God's love never fades; it points straight up to heaven to carry our thoughts thither; it points out in all directions to show where our love should go; it has candles on it to show that love is the light of life; it has presents on it to show that love is happiest in giving. What of the Easter-tree?

The Easter-tree is not evergreen, but has its leaves only in spring and summer. Through the last autumn and winter it stands with bare branches. But if you will look carefully, you will find that every bare branch of the Easter-tree is made up of crosses where the smaller branches shoot out each side of the main ones. All through the winter it shows us the skeleton of its beauty-to-be, that we may not forget there is always a cross behind beauty. It is a sort of Good Friday Tree before it can be an Easter-tree. Yet all the time it seems to have died by the gift of its leaves to the earth, its roots go down below the frost,

holding the sap until spring. The bare tree that will be an Easter-tree is first of all, then, a generous tree. It has given its best, and the cross-forms are its own by rights.

But the warmer days come. Spring is at hand. The sap comes up through the trunk and the branches, out into every twig on the tree. The buds swell fuller and fuller, and burst into green leaves. What are leaves? Just something pretty? Oh no! Leaves are hands that reach out and catch sunshine. They take in strength from the air, the sun and the rain. They are gatherers of more life for the tree. They are the roots that work in the air as the other roots work in the ground seeking out food. So the leaves of the Easter-tree teach us to gather in all the strength that we can for our souls. We must take in all the sunshine and rain of growth-help that we can.

The leaves of the Easter-tree do their work so abundantly that the tree has strength enough also to blossom. The flowers, like living candles on the tree, show the strength of the tree in beauty. Strength should make beauty either in flowers of body or soul. (Weakness is not beautiful, is it?) The kind of beauty of character so that you have many, many friends who come gladly to touch you whenever they can! The beauty that makes strangers smile a little more gently as they pass on, having looked in your eyes! The pleasant warmth in the heart just because a beautiful voice has been heard! Such beauty as this comes from the strength that, in its turn, has come from ingathering from the spring sunshine of the world.

The Easter-tree has it in its fragrant and exquisite blossoms.

Blossoms do not last, though. They are not meant to. They must turn into fruit, the fruit that has in its centre the seeds of new life. So character goes beyond beauty of life into new life for others. The seeds start new Easter-trees round about.

I like the leafy, blossomy Easter-tree even better than the Christmas-tree, myself. I wonder if you do also?

The Second Sunday

After Easter

A large burning candle.]

THE CANDLE AND THE HEARTH FIRES

“The Lord is my light and my salvation.”—Psalm xxvii. 1.

It was Easter morning hundreds of years ago. The great grey cathedral was just catching the rays of sunrise on its towers. Down in the market place, all was in shadow. From the cathedral chancel, the happy Alleluias of the choir rang high. They came nearer the doors. And as they came, out from the street-ends (that drew to the market place as spokes to the hub of a wheel) poured the people toward the great steps of the church. Every one was in his best clothes. The children, with their cheeks rosy and their eyes shining with eagerness, hurried behind Father in his silken jacket and Mother in her starched white headdress. Some one in each family carried a piece of fire-lighting tinder. Every home had been left with no fire since Good Friday noon. For the first time in months, there was no cheerful blaze in the fireplace under the kettle and oven. The houses were cold.

Out through the opening doors came the procession of choir and priests, singing still. Last of all came the Bishop himself, carrying in his arms a great candle, unlighted. It was a tremendous candle, five feet high and six inches thick. He set

it into a stone socket on the top step—and silence fell upon all, so that the doves on the cathedral roof-top could be heard cooing and fretting. The sunshine had, by now, crept down the towers to the rose-window; down to the row of saint-statues beneath; down to the door-tops; inch by inch down the carved doors. At last, the first sunray touched the tip of the Paschal candle. The Bishop took from his robes a burning-glass lens and held it over the candle wick, centring the sunray upon it. A moment of breathlessness. The wick smoked, glowed and burst into flame. The Easter sunrise had lighted the Easter candle.

The choir broke into a hymn of joy. "A light is sprung up in our darkness," they sang. "Christ is risen; He is risen indeed," answered the people. Then they pressed forward about the candle. Each piece of tinder was touched to the candle-flame and set afire. Sheltering the flickering flame with their hands, the fire-bearers turned and hurried back to their homes, where they knelt and lighted the ready-laid hearth-fire. The kindling caught, the logs began to snap, the cheery flames leaped up the wide throat of the chimney; the kettle began to sing! The family came home, and breakfast was cooked over the fire which should last them until next year for warmth and for light and for cooking. They would never let it go out. All the family life for the long months to come was to use the flame from the candle lighted by the Easter sunrise. The light of Christ was there in the fireplace!

Isn't that a heart-warming picture? Would

120 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

you be glad to put Easter to use in your home-life? You can! Light your fire of home-love at the Easter candle of Christ as your near and dear friend, so that no thought the year through shall be without Him. Then see if the sunshine of God's love does not find itself on your heart's hearth, to warm you and feed you and keep your life bright!

The Third Sunday After Easter

[A drawing of a spider's web—and
finally a cross.]

SPIDER-WEB FOLKS ¹

"Whose trust shall be a spider's web."—Job viii. 14:

FEW of us love spiders, it is safe to say. However well we may cover up our feelings, they make us feel "creepy." Why do we shrink so from them? Is it because they seem to be the most cruelly selfish of creatures?

The spider-web, spun so wonderfully on the bushes, reveals the ingenuity of the creature. From far out on the branches a multitude of threads seek a common centre. You might think at first sight that those beautiful filaments were like the rays of the kindly sun, that each sought to convey some blessing to a needy place—but no! quite the contrary! They all lead inwards, not outwards. The whole web is but a continuation of the arms of the beast that sits at the centre, watchful and alert. The spider-web reveals the spider-motto, "All I can get." Once we get to know him well, we can imagine the spider wishing it were possible to weave his web larger and larger until it covered the face of the fields.

Are you and I at all like spiders? Do we ever

¹ Reprinted by permission from *How the Cross Goes Around the World*, published 1915 by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of America.

wish we could spread a web and catch things out of our reach and suck them dry? Have you a spider-heart? Do you desire all you can get for yourself? If so, then your heart is marked with a big, black capital *I*!

Now take that capital *I*, and like a good Christian, cross it out by drawing a line through it, and see what you have made. A cross! Thought of self "crossed" out! See how you have turned the selfish *I* into a cross with arms that reach out. Suppose that they keep reaching out, when will they meet? Not until they have encircled the globe and met on the other side. Do you see what this means? We think of others, and they, following our example, think of still others, who continue the good work until the whole world is encircled by unselfishness. Once cross out the capital *I*, and you will not be satisfied until its arms have embraced the whole world.

Are we spider-web Christians, or Christians of the out-reaching Cross? Should we not belong to the latter class, since it is to our faith that we owe those things that make us happy—our homes, with their comforts and conveniences; our hospitals and doctors, and all that goes to relieve our sufferings; our country and all that it stands for; our knowledge that God is our Friend and Father?

Are all these blessings meant for us only? Shall we pounce on everything we can get and keep it for ourselves? Remember the spider crouching at the centre of the web, and the spider-heart marked with the capital *I*. The thought makes us cry out at once that the spider-web Christian is no Christian

at all, and that if there is a big, black capital *I* in our hearts now, we will cross it out and think of others. We will give away all the happiness we can find. We will be Christians of the out-reaching Cross kind—of the kind whose thoughts reach out in love, north, south, east and west—until they have gone around the world.

**The Fourth Sunday
After Easter**

[A growing plant and a seed.]

SEED AND SOIL

“The seed is the word of God.”—St. Luke viii. 11.

It is planting time. In the ploughed fields and in gardens everywhere seeds are being sown. And out in the fields where there is no ploughing by humans, Nature is planting seeds too. They lodged on the ground last autumn, perhaps, but by now the rain and the frost and the feet of the sheep coming down to the brook have pushed them into the earth. Everywhere it is seed-time.

Jesus wants us to think about seed sowing. You remember His story about the sower, of course. Let us think as carefully as we can about the part of that story we may have skipped in our thinking thus far.

What is a seed? The mother-plant worked all last summer to make it. And when the wind at last floated it away across the grass, the ferns and the rocks to a place on the further slope of the hill, was the seed not a kind of a prayer? The life of the older plant had poured itself into it. The parent plant would not outlive the next winter. But this seed and its mates would. Next spring they would shoot up, continuing the life of the plant that was gone. I often have thought as I watched the sailing seeds of the fall how each one

was a-praying that there might be more life on and on. It is a prayer for more of the same life that has brought these to life-giving power.

In Jesus' own story He said the seed is like the word of God. I do not suppose He meant only the Bible, for He Himself was the greatest Word God had ever spoken, and the New Testament was not yet written. No, He meant *living words*. He was one; we can be. A word is like a seed; our life goes into it and the word flies away, finally to come to rest in some one's heart, and to grow there in newness. Each word that is loving and helpful is a prayer. We hope it will do something for some one. If we are God's words we are words of His praying; seeds that go out into the world of people's lives carrying all that He has put of Himself into them. I want you to think of God this morning as a parent plant watching us as seeds going forth from Him to take root in the earth of others' lives. How He hopes we may be planted and grow there! How He prays us on our way! Yes, a seed is a prayer; and we are God's own seeds, prayed forth into the wide universe.

Follow the seed as it begins its work in the ground. The rain moistens the shell of it until the life power can get free by creeping rootlets at the earth. Each root is a tube sucking in food from the earth. The green stalk of the plant works its way up to the light. Larger and larger the plant grows. Where does it come from? Was all this plant in the seed? We know better than that. *The plant is made of the dirt where the seed fell!* Yes, of the dirt! The seed has

simply taken the earth and helped it show what was in it. The earth has had its chance through the seed. The green leaves, the white flower, the seed-pods; all these are made out of the ground !

If we are God's prayers, as seeds that He sends forth into life, this is the way we work. Our influence, our prayers, our help, our interest and our sympathy, these are the roots that creep out and give the earth of the lives we are planted in their chance to show what is in them. We help those we love to express themselves. We make their possibilities into flowering, into self-finding. What the seed does for the ground where it falls, we do in the lives of those in whose hearts we have influence.

I believe this with all that is in me; don't you? If I kneel down beside my bed and pray hard for my friend who is not quite as strong as he should be, my prayer is my own seed-self flying across the miles and into his inmost self, to act as the seed in the soil of his possibilities, and give him his chance. *Whether he knows it or not, I have become the part of his life that prays!* I am seed in the earth of him!! God's seed.

That is what Christ does in our lives. He is the seed that gives us true living. For us, then, "to live is Christ." We live, yet it is not we but Christ in us. And as He is in our lives, like the growing seed-power that makes us find our true nature, so we can be to those that we love. Seed and soil! God or Christ or we; and influence on others!!!

SEED AND SOILS

"A sower went forth to sow."—St. Matthew xiii. 3.

THE titles up at the top of stories we read are handles to take hold of them by. Even when no title is given we often make up one for ourselves. Jesus never put a title over any of His stories, but we have. Once we guessed wrong.

There is the story we call "The Parable of the Sower." The title, I feel sure, should be "The Parable of the Different Soils." For that is what the story is about.

Last Sunday we talked about seeds and the way they gave the dirt its chance to show what was in it. A lot depends, however, upon the dirt. This story proves that.

The sower goes scattering his good seed. The hillsides of the Holy Land are not very rich. The paths run zig-zag along the sloping patches of earth. Here and there the rock pushes through. Every inch is precious. Thorn bushes will get the dirt if man does not first. The sower throws his seed with a wide sweep; for perhaps a few spears of wheat will grow here and there outside the bit of real field. And every spear of wheat that can be grown counts.

"Some fell by the wayside." How is a path made? By the feet of those who go along the

same line over and over again, each stepping where the last has stepped. The earth may have been in the beginning just as rich as any other. But it is trodden hard now. And the seed cannot get into its depths. It lies on the surface and the birds spy it. The wayside is ever so easy to copy. We do things over and over again. Repetition makes our spirits calloused and hardened. The seed cannot get into the depths of our spirit, simply because we have gotten used to it all. The things we know well we know too well for them to make any fresh impression upon us. We get wayside unless we beware! And then God does not get into our life; He only lies on the surface of it. If this is so, something will soon carry the seed that might do so much away from our soil.

“Some fell on stony places.” Where a thin layer of earth covers a ledge of rock. It is so thin that it gets warmed through more quickly than other earth. The seed falls into it and springs up, but the roots soon come to the rock and are stopped. The plant withers away. “Because there is no depth of earth.” We have feelings that are easily touched. Do we feel a quick thrill of answer when the seed comes to us? Do we get “all stirred up” over fine things? But down underneath we have not let our wills into the matter? We have not seriously gone to work at it? The rock is hard down under the thin layer of warm earth? We have splendid feelings, but not so splendid a will? It is a long work and a hard work if we truly undertake it. But we are easy promisers? Or “quitters”? Be careful!

“Some fell among thorns.” The earth was all right, but something else was there first. Thorns had a head start. How is it with us? What are we truly most interested in? Character, helpfulness, and so on? Or a good time, and pleasant things always? Has something else a deeper hold on our hearts? Do we want something else than Christ wants more than will give Him first chance? Has something less good got a head start? I hope not!

“Some fell on good ground.” The seed got its chance. Has it with us? It is the soils tell the story. In their difference is the difference of result. For the seed is always the same.

Which kind of soils are we?

THE FISHING BOAT

“Fishers of men.”—St. Mark i. 17.

JESUS' disciples were most of them fishermen. He told them, however, “I will make you fishers of men.” And when He went away into heaven that first Ascension Day, they began this new kind of fishing. There were some new things they had to learn; but there must have been many things they already knew of the other kind of fishing that helped them in this.

It was not only the twelve whom Jesus made fishers of men. We are His disciples to-day; we, too, should be fishers of men.

There is one great difference between man-fishing and fish-fishing we can see at the start. When we catch fish, we take them out of the water where they can live into the air where they can't. When we catch men's souls, we take them out of the life where they *can't* live into the life where they *can*. We save their real lives from drowning. For the things that are selfish and mean and only satisfying to a lower self, strangle and kill the best self. Jesus calls us to save men into what they can be if they have their chance.

CHRIST MAKES US FISHERS OF MEN
TO HELP OTHERS INTO WHAT THEY SHOULD BE.

Let's call our body and its life a fisherman's boat. It is the hull of the little ship in which we

sail over the sea of living, in which ever so many poor souls are struggling hard to keep up and alive.

The first thing we need is a sail. The sail moves the boat through the water, you say? Oh, but does it? The sail only catches the wind; the wind moves the boat. The sail is like a big hand that reaches out and grasps the wind tight, so that the wind pulls the fisherman's boat through the water. In our own lives the sail is like prayer. For when we really pray, we are just putting out a hand and taking hold of God. His is the power, not ours. We put up the sail of our real prayers, and God fills it out of His strength. He carries us with Him. We find ourselves able to say, "I CAN," knowing all the time it is God who gives us the power.

CHRIST MAKES ME A FISHER OF MEN
TO HELP OTHERS INTO WHAT THEY SHOULD BE.
I CAN!

But no sail is of any use unless it is held up by a mast. The mast lifts the sail to the place where the wind can give it its power. And a mast without a sail is no more good than the sail without its mast. A mast must be firm, upright, pointing toward heaven.

What is the mast of our fishing-boat-selves? It is a purpose in life. If we have a strong ideal which we will not let fall, it acts like a mast. We have a picture of what we hope to do with ourselves, what we vow we will be some day? Our intentions are fixed? Then our prayers are held up because there is a heaven-pointing purpose to

132 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

fasten them to. We say, "I MUST," and plant the mast for the prayer-sail.

CHRIST MAKES ME A FISHER OF MEN
TO HELP OTHERS INTO WHAT THEY SHOULD BE.

I CAN!

I MUST!

The mast and the sail are needed most surely. There is, however, one thing more, as any good sailor will tell us. The rudder.

The rudder down at the back of the boat turns this way or that, and the whole boat obediently swings as it decides. The wind comes in a certain direction; the sail must catch the wind, then. And the rudder guides the boat into the wind. Otherwise the wind goes whistling past, leaving the limp sail flapping and quivering. The rudder to steer, by all means!

The power to decide that we have is the rudder, of course. I have told you many times of the great importance of choice and of the will. It is the will that heads us in this direction or that, so that the mast of our purpose and the sail of our prayers can catch the wind of God's help. We decide, saying, "I WILL," and the rest follows.

CHRIST MAKES ME A FISHER OF MEN
TO HELP OTHERS INTO WHAT THEY SHOULD BE.

I CAN!

I MUST!

AND I WILL!

The fisherman's boat is ready then. Nevertheless, we cannot yet catch men for Christ. Some further equipment is necessary.

How are we to know where it is safe to sail our fisherman's boat? There are rocks and sand-bars and reefs that oftentimes wreck boats. There are mistakes we might make we feel we must avoid if we can. So some older fisherman comes to us and shows us a map of the sea. "Here it is safe," he points out. "Here it is not; boats have been wrecked here many a time." We take a chart along, then, when we set sail, of what other people have learned by experience. The charts are our teaching, our knowledge from others.

CHRIST MAKES ME A FISHER OF MEN
TO HELP OTHERS INTO WHAT THEY SHOULD BE.

I CAN!

I MUST!

AND I WILL!

I WILL USE

MY KNOWLEDGE.

Yet sometimes we have to sail where few people have been. Perhaps we go into deep water, out of sight of the land. Charts do not help any more. We have to decide for ourselves. No one can really advise us. What shall we do? What can we use? A compass!

A compass is most mysterious. It seems quite miraculous. There hangs that little steel needle, always pointing in the same direction, no matter how we twist the compass-box. We can go by that safely. It gives us our directions. We cannot get lost, no matter how far beyond chart-places we sail.

You have guessed already the compass of the fishing-life. There is only one thing it can be—

134 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

our conscience. Mysterious, always pointing in one direction, no matter what twistings of thought we may have—the compass of conscience! The magnetic pole for it is the Love which is God. It always points to the helpful thing we can do, wherever we are. So we must trust in the compass of conscience.

CHRIST MAKES US FISHERS OF MEN
TO HELP OTHERS INTO WHAT THEY SHOULD BE.

I CAN!

I MUST!

AND I WILL!

I WILL USE

MY KNOWLEDGE,

MY CONSCIENCE.

All is ready now for the fishing of men? I should say not. The one thing more that is lacking makes all the rest foolish and useless until it is supplied. We have not the fishing nets! And all the boat and its furnishings exist only for the sake of the nets! *To get the nets to the fishing grounds!* The nets are the reason for the boat. Don't consider them only an extra; they are most important of all. It is the nets catch the fish. Boat, sail, mast, charts and compass need nets for their completed work. We are not out on a mere pleasant sailing-trip; we are fishers of men going to work!

The nets are the nets of love. It is love of others that catches them into true life. All the rest of our living is only to bring love into action. Love is no extra; it is the reason for everything else. Prayer, purpose, will, knowledge and conscience,

all are for love's use. It is with love Christ bids us catch men.

CHRIST MAKES US FISHERS OF MEN
TO HELP OTHERS INTO WHAT THEY SHOULD BE.

I CAN !

I MUST

AND I WILL !

I WILL USE

MY KNOWLEDGE,

MY CONSCIENCE,

AND MY LOVE,

IN HIS WORK.

GOD HELP ME ! AMEN !

HERMIT-HEART

“ Oh make our hearts Thy dwelling-place
And worthier Thee.”

Hymn 375.

WHEN I was a small boy, there was in our small town a house we called the Hermit's House. Once it had been a most splendid mansion, with big pillars in front, and wide gardens, and hedges; far back from the street. We were told that in the days of the Revolution Washington and Lafayette had once stopped in its spacious front chambers. It must have been a wayside tavern of more than usual beauty. But now things were very, very different. The old house was tumbling to pieces. Its great columns were crooked and decaying. Its shutters were either splintered or hanging askew. The clapboards were being pulled off by the woodbine vines that clambered even over the ridgepole. Shingles had rotted until there were yawning holes in the roof. The white paint of days past had disappeared, and its place was taken by green mould and moss. Under the ragged elm trees the old garden struggled with conquering weeds. It seemed a deserted house.

Yet if you passed there after dark (hurrying breathlessly by) far out in the ell there shone a faint flicker of light. Upstairs there at the back, through broken windows thick with dirt and stuffed

with old rags, with a vine thrusting through the frame; in this desolate room lived the Hermit! He never entered the rest of the house. We seldom saw him. Once in a while, though, at twilight he came shuffling out the back door. He was bent and old. His tangled beard he tucked inside his ragged coat-front. He felt his way with a cane, yet he was not blind. He slunk down back streets into the woods, hunting for roots and for nuts. You shivered as he passed. It was weird that any man should exist in this wretched way. But no one could take him away, for he owned the house and could do as he pleased. So we were told.

It all felt wrong to us. Here was this house that might have been made again what it once was. Each one of us drew imaginative pictures for himself what he would do with such a house if he could. We would lift the sagged sills into place again, clean out the rubbish, mend the stairs and repair the chimney so it would draw. We would make the doors swing wide on their hinges. We would open the blinds, wash the windows, weed the garden, trim the walks under the elms. We would fill the house with warmth and with light. It should be the friendly house once it had been. And then we would have gone to that barred door that led to the lonely back room and hammered on it (till the cobwebs shook clean of the dust of years) and cried through the cracks, "Old Hermit, come out of your one room. Come out into your house and *live!*" We would have given him fresh clothes and good food. We would have coaxed him to pull out from behind the loose

brick in the chimney the gold pieces he was hiding, and have told him they were doing no good there. We would have made him ready to stand in the doorway between the white pillars and welcome his friends and the children that played in the grass. That is the dream that we had !

And the older I grow the better dream I think that it was. Do you too ?

Hermit-House ! How about Hermit-Heart too ? The old house is a picture of some people's lives. They live in one back room of a great empty house that could be friendly and open. The rest of the house goes to pieces slowly but surely. There is no light in its windows, no fire on its hearth, no cheeriness in its spacious rooms. Only dust and mould and the leaking rain and a stuffy, dingy back room where the hermit hides his treasure and is miserable ! It is a picture of selfishness !

Oh ! never live in a Hermit-Heart, will you ? To day is the birthday of the Church. Whitsunday. When the Holy Spirit changed men's hearts from Hermit-Hearts to Home-Hearts. When the changes we dreamed we should make in the old man's house were made in the lives of those the Christ loved. As their hearts were then, so we want our hearts to be now. We want to live in the whole of our lives, not in one cramped back room. We want the doors of our welcome to swing wide. We want to have the Holy Spirit the warmth and light of our friendly home-hearts. We want no miserly, hermit existence. As Christ was, so would we be !

Trinity Sunday

[A small megaphone, and perhaps a picture of a Greek dramatic mask.]

THE MASK AND THE MEGAPHONE

“Three persons and one God.”—The Catechism.

TO-DAY is Trinity Sunday. It is as great a day for grown-ups in the church as Christmas or as Easter. But I'm afraid you who have fewer birthdays behind you may wonder what it's all about. Do you suppose I can begin to tell you? I shall only try to *begin*.

There is a very puzzling, mysterious sentence that goes with Trinity Sunday. Say it over after me: “GOD IS THREE PERSONS AND ONE GOD.” That sounds strange and almost absurd, you think? It doesn't “make sense”? Wait and see a moment, until I show you something about that word “person” that I am sure you did not know.

Shut your eyes and see if you can see in your imagination this picture of the long ago!

Out under a clear blue sky with never a cloud there is a hillside crowned with ever-so-green trees. And into that hillside has been cut a great half-circle of sloping seats, all marble. Down at the bottom of the hill below the seats is a flat, round, sanded floor and a wall. This is a tremendous open-air theatre in Greece, hundreds and hundreds of years ago. The people come into the rows of seats, dressed in white robes, red,

blue, green and lavender. They look like an immense flower-garden in the summer sunshine. A trumpet sounds and silence falls : such stillness that the swish of the waves on the white sands can be heard from the sky-blue sea. The solemn play begins.

But it is very far down to the sanded stage-floor from the top rows of seats. It is hard to see, and harder yet to hear. The wall down there helps send the voices up and out, but that is not enough. The actors in the play (which is a religious play about the gods and heroes the old Greeks believed in)—the actors wear shoes with soles six inches thick, so that they seem tall; they wear over their heads strange masks that make their faces seem twice their natural size. And in the mouth of every mask is hidden a small megaphone !

Do you know what a megaphone does to the voice of one who speaks through it? Some one tell me. Yes, it makes the voice seem louder and more clear. See, I have one here. How it magnifies my voice when I speak through it ! The mask with a megaphone did just that. Then all the people heard. And there was a mask for every separate character in the holy play. Perhaps one actor could take two or three parts, one after the other, wearing a new mask and different clothes each time. It was a new mask, to be sure, but the same voice, the same man.

Now comes the point of all this picture. The masks were called "persona." (Say that old word with me : PER-SONA.) The "sona" means, a sound or voice; the "per" means, "coming

through." So the whole word means, *The Voice Comes Through*. And you and I have kept the word in our own language when we say a "person."

GOD IS THREE PERSONS AND ONE GOD.

PERSONA MEANS, "THE VOICE COMES THROUGH."

Then the Truth which Trinity Sunday says is just this one: that God is always the same God, but now He makes His voice clear to us through this "person," now through that. It is one God; there are three "persona." If you want to know what the persona are, you will find the answer in your catechism, just following the creed:—

FIRST, I LEARN TO BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER, WHO HATH MADE ME AND ALL THE WORLD.

SECONDLY, IN GOD THE SON, WHO HATH REDEEMED ME AND ALL MANKIND.

THIRDLY, IN GOD THE HOLY GHOST, WHO SANCTIFIETH ME AND ALL THE ELECT PEOPLE OF GOD.

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit; these are the persons (or "personæ"); God Himself one God speaking in these three great ways to all the listening world.

GOD IS THREE PERSONS AND ONE GOD.

PERSONA MEANS, "THE VOICE COMES THROUGH."

THE "PERSONA" OF THE ONE GOD ARE THREE, THE FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT.

Whenever you hear the word "person," remember, then, the old, old mask with the megaphone in its mouth. Are you, perhaps, such an one yourself for God's voice to speak through?

V

SUNDAYS AFTER TRINITY

- A. "OUT OF DOORS"
- B. "GAMES AND SCHOOL"
- C. "JUST STORIES"

The First Sunday After Trinity

[A branch of new leaves.]

“FEATHERY LEAVES”

“The servant of the Lord must be gentle.”—2 Tim. ii. 24.

MIRACLES are everywhere these days of early summer. A miracle is something that seems as if it could *not* be, it is so beautiful and mysterious, and yet it *is*!

I hold here a branch of new leaves. They are feathery and delicate. They seem like the wings of butterflies. They are so thin and so soft that they tear at the slightest touch. They are like green gauze. They are as tender as rose-petals. Nevertheless, they have conquered the hard bark of the branch. Somehow they have forced themselves through the tree's armour. In spite of the casing of bark, they have pushed out into the warm air and the sunshine. They have beaten. Yet how is it possible? Not a single leaf is torn or shredded, although we would think after that struggle to get through the sheathing they would be in rags even if they succeeded. How did these feathery leaves conquer? We should *think* it absolutely impossible. It is a miracle.

There must be a kind of strength that we do not know much about. We think that strength is pushing and struggling and striking with hammering power. We think of the strong man as the one

that is able to crush his enemies down to the ground. We try to be strong ourselves by shutting our teeth, straining our muscles and grimly mastering whatever resists us. We meet strength with strength. We push against pushing, we strike in return, we conquer by might if we can. That is the thought of strength as usually we have it.

For all that, there is some other strength in *gentleness* which we can see here. These leaves conquered the bark by something other than might. Why, I saw a photograph the other day of some mushrooms that had grown up under a concrete pavement and split it wide open! Any one of the mushrooms you could have broken with one finger-weight of strength. But they split the concrete as these leaves did their bark.

Yes, we must think more of the power of gentleness. And less of harsh brute-force and crushing. We must get a better idea of a better kind of strength. We must give back good to evil's attack. We must meet things we oppose with gentleness and with affection. How many times we forget this! "I'll get square with him!" I hear a boy mutter. "I will make her sorry some day, for I'll pay her back!" I hear some girl promise herself. We nurse grudges; we attempt to even things up; to give as good as we are sent; we strike back as hard as we are hit—and a bit harder. TWO WRONGS DO NOT MAKE A RIGHT. Just because I am injured I must not injure back. We are not like the doctors who believe that if you have a poison in your body it takes another poison to cure it. That may be good medicine,

but it is not good spirit. It is gentleness that really wins. Even if you knock down the boy that has punched you, you have not truly won, for he hates you still. You have only made him surly and wait his chance to catch you off your guard. How much better to do something to change his feelings about you, so that he cannot dislike you any more! Some patient unwillingness to hit back because you show him you think he's too good a chap to enjoy a fight; this goes a lot further. GENTLENESS WINS; FOR IT ALONE REACHES THE HEART.

Jesus said many things that show this. And they show He does not mean cowardice, either. It takes more courage, more grit, to meet harshness with gentleness, than it does with more harshness. “Resist not evil” (that is, with the same spirit), He Who was the bravest gentle One the world has ever known, said. “But meet evil with good!”

Feathery leaves! Conquering the hard bark with their miracle-power. Gentleness stronger than harshness! Let us try it, in Christ's Name!

TWO WRONGS DO NOT MAKE A RIGHT.

GENTLENESS WINS; FOR IT ALONE REACHES THE HEART.

**The Second Sunday
After Trinity**

[*A lantern.*]

“ A PATH IN THE WOODS ”

“ Thou wilt show me the path of life.”—Psalm xvi. 11.

WERE you ever lost in the woods? I hope not. For it is not a happy experience, I can tell you. How well I remember the one time I was !

The trees all about endlessly, bewilderingly ! No light out through their trunks in any direction ! They hemmed me in on every side. The briers caught at my clothes. Branches snapped like whip-lashes into my face. Cobwebs got in my eyes. Roots tripped my blundering feet. Underbrush shut off every possible far look. The great, green mystery of the forest had turned against me. Even the birds seemed to be making fun of my swishing and ploughing through the leaves. Round and round in a big circle I went, coming back to the old pine tree the lightning had scarred. At last I climbed it, but from its top branches there was nothing to see but tossing tree-tops. Down I slid once more, to start out again hunting, hunting for a path. At last under my feet, there it was ! Oh, what a relief ! That line of trodden brown earth running like a snake through the endless woods, leading from somewhere to somewhere ! That blessed path ! There was no more puzzlement in the forest.

Everything was in its place, to the right hand or the left of the path. No more briers reached me, no more cobwebs blinded my eyes. The birds were not mocking me now. I was no longer lost ! I did not know where it had come from ; I did not know where it went to ; but it would take me out into the open. So I followed it, hopefully and trustfully. Until light showed between the trees and I stepped out on the road. And I said out loud, “ Why, of course ! ” for I knew where I was !

Indeed, I got so sure of the path that I used to come over it at night with a lantern. The lantern only threw a circle of light a few feet ahead of me and on either side. But it was enough. For it showed the path. The light was always a few steps ahead on the path, moving as I moved. I could not get lost. But what a feeling I would have had without that lantern, lost in the woods and at night !

Now let us think of ourselves. Does the world strike us as being puzzling ? There are so many things to learn, and they seem sometimes so to disagree ! There are some things that whip into our faces and sting. There are some things that trip us. Life is like the forest. We can get lost. I hope we have not been lost yet. For we have a path. But we might get lost if we did not have it—and a lantern. There has to be some meaning in life for us not to get muddled. We have to find some direction where others have passed safely and surely through. Their footsteps lead the way. A meaning in life is like a path in the woods. To keep us from missing our way. What is it ?

Do not expect me to tell you some new thing. The path is one that has been travelled many and many a time through the forest. Simply *the meaning of life is the chance to be helpful!* On and on we go. And Christ is our lantern on that path. We carry Him to show us the path, and He brings us out into further helpfulness yet. Until at the last we come out into understanding of God.

Take this text then, and let it suggest you a picture. That is all I want. "Thou wilt show me the path of life," says the writer, speaking to God. God will show us the path through the woods by the lantern of Christ's example. We might get lost in the woods and in the dark. With the lantern and the path we are safe. We shall step forward surely. On and on.

The Third Sunday After Trinity

[*A branch with many shoots, pruned
with pruning-shears during the talk.*]

PRUNING

“ Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it that it may bear more fruit.”—St. John xv. 2.

THERE is a proverb, “ Jack-at-all-trades, good at none.” We recognize what it teaches. “ Don’t try to do everything. Find the one thing and do that well.” There is another proverb that says the same truth. “ Shoemaker, stick to your last ! ” “ Don’t try to do anything but shoemaking if you are a shoemaker ! ”

When a farmer takes out his pruning-shears and goes out into his apple orchard, he is saying the same thing to the apple trees. Do you see the difference between an apple tree that is taken care of and an apple tree that has been let take care of itself? The apple tree that is so taken care of that it bears big, luscious apples is one that has been pruned. The farmer has taken his shears and cut off every shoot that will not bear, and many that might. He has picked out as many branches as he thinks this tree has strength enough for, and he only allows one apple to grow on each branch. Then the whole life of the tree is put into the fewer apples, and they grow as they should. But the apple tree that is left to itself sends out

many shoots all over its branches, and every shoot tries to bear all the apples that it can. And when the apples come they are little and hard and insignificant. No one wants them enough to bother to pick them. I have seen many such trees in the orchards of abandoned farms, and they make me sad. For the fine old trees might be doing so much better if they were pruned.

This is pruning time in the orchards. Isn't it a good time to prune our own lives? For some of us, even as youngsters, are trying to do too many things. We cannot succeed in more than one kind of thing. Are we clipping away the shoots that do not seem likely to bring the kind of fruit that we want? The fruit that we want is a Christian heart. There are some branches in our character that are starting that will not carry that kind of fruit. Think for yourselves. There are some branches that will not carry much of it. Better take the pruning-scissors and lop them off. Be like the pruned apple tree, not like the one that goes to uselessness because it has tried too many branchings. Don't try to be a "Jack-at-all-trades" in your character. Let God be your gardener, with His shears in His hand. "Every branch that beareth not fruit, He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit."

The Fourth Sunday
After Trinity
[*A kite, complete.*]

FLYING KITES

“On the wings of the wind.”—Psalm xviii. 10.

KITE-FLYING time ! How those of us who happen to be boys count on it ! Why not the girls too ?

To feel the tug of the kite-string and watch the kite floating up next the clouds ; this is true fun ! How the kite does pull ! As if it wanted to get free and go sailing higher and higher. As if it wanted to get away from the bothersome string that ties it to the earth. As if it were angry at the small boy who dared hold it fast !

What would happen, though, if the kite did get free ? Suppose the kite-string broke. Would the kite, finding itself free, take the chance and leap up and up ? Of course not. It would come swooping, fluttering down to the ground. The string that seemed to hold it down was what kept it up ! What appeared to be a bothersome and fretting tying to the earth was the power that let the kite stay soaring in the sky. To be “on the wings of the wind ” the kite must be held to obedience.

I have been like a kite many times. Haven't you too ? The things I fretted at and tugged against, that I was made to do ; these I wanted to be free of, were the very things that made me able to stay flying at all. As I watch kite-flying and feel the

angry twitch of the string, I say to myself laughingly, "That's just the way you act oftentimes." Obedience is so hard to learn. There is nothing it is more difficult to accept than the sentence, "It's for your own good. We know better than you what is best for you." Nevertheless, the older I get, the more I can look back and see that my tugging at the kite-string was mistaken, and that that was the only way I could have kept high at all.

Those who are wiser than we *do* know best, after all. They are not anxious to hold us down; they want us to fly in the great open sky of the best things. They are trying to keep us up! They must hold the kite-string, no matter how hard we pull at it. We may think we could go up and up into the clouds or the blue if we were only allowed. It is to be what we want to be that we angrily plunge and jerk; not ever dreaming that if the string broke we would not fly higher, but pitch downward to the ground, to our great danger, perhaps. No, obedience is necessary, whether we like it or not. For it is the only way the kite flies, to be held by its string. We must be held down to fly up!

THE FOUNTAIN KEEPER ¹

“ With Thee is the fountain of life.”—Psalm xxxvi. 9.

DEEP in the woods and high up in the hills there is a spring of never-failing water. It is a big cup of brown earth, lined with pebbles and covered over with waving ferns. The cold water bubbles up, fills the earth-cup full and runs off through the moss and the pine-needles into the open field. Down it ripples into the valley, where other streams join it. Then on past the town, where it gives drinking water, turns the mill-wheels and waters the gardens; further and further, greater and greater, serving the world.

The water comes clear and full from the spring, however, because there is a man who goes to it once in so often and cleans out the ooze and the fallen leaves. He is careful that it gets its channel to run. He keeps the fountain, loving its mystery, and thinking, too, of the towns down below that need water. Up out of the unknown depths of the earth this rivulet bursts. He cannot understand it, but he *can* guard it for others' sake.

May I tell you a fable about such a fountain-keeper and his spring of water? The people down in the town saw that the water was needed for their

¹ With acknowledgments to Rev. S. S. Marquis for the fable here adapted.

thirst and their gardens and mills. They paid the fountain-keeper for the water (for the land that it came from was his), and they counted on him to keep the spring clear. But one day the thought came, "Why bother with the fountain any more? Why not build a dam at the foot of the valley and collect enough water for all their uses? Then they could say to the fountain-keeper, 'We are through with you. You can do whatever you wish with the water from your spring; we need it no more.'"

The idea struck the people of the town as a good one. They built their reservoir. They were getting rich, and they never went into the hills to see the springs for themselves. They did not guess what would happen. Their reservoir filled up to the brim, and the broken-hearted fountain-keeper let his spring water run where it could. Barred from its old channel, it sunk into the ground here and there and was lost.

For a long time the people down in the town saw no difference in their water supply. They drank from the reservoir; they used it for their gardens and mills. But presently there began to be an unpleasant taste to the water and an unpleasant odour. The mill-wheels got clogged with ooze. The gardens were not sweet and wholesome. The reservoir was stagnant. Its water was stale and foul. There was a scum on its surface. Down in the town children began to be ill. The doctor said it was the water that was to blame. Things went from bad to worse. The plague broke out!

Whereupon the people came together to decide

what to do. The plain thing was to go back to the fountain-keeper and ask him to turn the flow from his spring once more to them, to sweeten the reservoir and give them back health. No price was too great. For the fresh water was more precious yet. It meant life.

Every fable has an explanation. Keeping the story in mind, let us name the things there are in it. The fountain can stand for the Church. It is there that the Water of Life comes bubbling purely up into mysterious power, for use down below. The town beyond the valley is the world as it is. We call it Civilization. Everything that makes life worth the living has come from that Water of Life, of which the Church is the main spring. But Civilization did not realize its need of the spring. It said, "Let us build a reservoir to hold enough water so that we will not need the springs any more." The reservoir is Self-Satisfaction. So the Waters of Life gathered in the great pool behind the dam, and for a long time the world did not find any great difference. Gradually the water grew stagnant, however. The things of which Civilization was so proud turned unpleasant. Selfishness and hardness of heart and mere busyness crept in. Children were poisoned; the trouble grew. Then came the great plague of the war-makers. And the world realizes what a mistake has been made. Back to the fountain-keeper they come, one and all, begging for the pure, fresh, clear, unspoiled Water of Life once again. The day has come when the world asks the Church for its gift of itself. "With Thee is the fountain of life!" is

the cry. Who is the fountain-keeper that shall save the sick world from its impure Waters of Life by the clean wholesomeness of the fountain of God? *You! You who are children!* you are the keepers of the never-failing springs. Give the sad world what it so sorely needs, by your Church. Keep it pure! Send forth its waters to bless and to heal! Be ready! The world is coming to you on its knees. To-morrow? To-day!

The Sixth Sunday
After Trinity

THE EAGLE'S NEST

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest."—Deuteronomy xxxii. 11.

HIGH up on the face of the cliff the eagle builds its nest. There is a narrow shelf of rock where the little ones may be safe. No one can climb up there to rob the nest. No preying animal can sneak near to snatch the eaglets. The ledge of rock is a fortress.

The little eagles in the nest are fed by the flying mother and father eagles, who swoop far away with their great wings and pounce down upon what they want for the eagle-chicks at home. And the little ones grow fast, never stirring from the nest or the shelf of rock. Their wings are growing, but they do not quite dare to use them. It looks so dangerous to leap out into the air and trust the untried wings. The ground is very, very far below. They might fall! And it is so much easier just to wait in the nest and have all the food they want brought to them there by the sweeping flight of those who do dare trust the air and wings.

But the older birds are worried at these timid youngsters of theirs. They have tried to coax them to fly by showing them the joy of it. (What fun it must be to go sailing through the open sky

as the eagle can!) What is to be done? The decision is made. Some day, without any warning, the parent eagles suddenly seize the nest and commence to pull it all to pieces! They tear it apart, and push the tatters of it over the edge of the rock-shelf into space. The poor eaglets are without any nest any more. They huddle together at the back of the shelf, trembling; but it is no use. The father and mother with head and wings push them nearer and nearer the edge and over they go!!!

Do they fall? Not at all. They find their wings spread before they know what they've done. They are not flying with the great sweeps that the older eagles have learned—but they are *flying*! They flutter and bungle a little, and they get back to the ledge just as soon as they can. Yet there they meet pushing bodies they cannot equal in strength, that shove them off again and again. Soon the small eagles are fluttering less. They use their wings more freely. They enjoy the feeling of floating on air. They take longer turns. Even the old cedar tree across the valley is not beyond them. They roost there all night. For there is no nest any more on the cliff.

They are not babies any more!

Has anything ever happened to you at all like this?

You are getting to be no longer children. How fast you grow up! Babyhood is a long distance behind you. When you were tiny kiddies, however, you were like the eaglets in the undisturbed nest. Everything you needed was brought to you. You

had a right to be selfish ; for you had not learned to take care of yourself. Food and clothes and home and love were all yours without any earning on your part. It was father's happiness and mother's to do for you as the eagles did for their young in the safe nest on the face of the cliff. You had *rights*. You must be taken care of.

But there comes a time when you and I ought to be like baby eagles no more. We are growing up. We ought to use our powers for ourselves. Our parents and elder friends want us not to stay little children, but to know the joy of flying out in real life. It is time we began a little to share their larger life. It is not good for us to be fed with all the good things we need without some earning of them. So the nest is torn up and we learn to fly. (That does not mean that we are no longer close to those who tear up the nest. We can be closer than ever, for we can now fly side by side out into the truth of all living.)

There comes a time, in other words, when we do not talk of the nest of RIGHTS any more, but of OPPORTUNITIES. We want to grow up, not only in body, but likewise in character. We are launched out into the free air of helpfulness, usefulness, chances to love and to serve. The ledge is all right to come back to. We always have rights. But they are only a starting-point for our real life of flying in the heavens ! And when that time comes when the nest of babyishness is torn up and we must grow up, whether or no, we must remember it is the best kind of love so to do. If the eagles had let the eaglets stay on their shelf

of stone it might have been love of a kind, but not love of the best kind.

Sometimes the deepest love forces us almost harshly to do the thing we should prefer not to do. For we might dread the open air for ever, in spite of the fact that we are made for it and the wings of our growing power-to-live are ready for the adventure of still better things. Don't stay on the narrow shelf of rock in the nest of RIGHTS too long then, my small friends. Understand it when your nest is torn up and you are pushed out into OPPORTUNITIES. It means only that you are not any longer a baby, but must begin to be grown up a bit—for your own good. Remember the eagles and their torn-up nest ! And be ready !

The Seventh Sunday
After Trinity

THE BEE-HIVE AND THE ANT-HILL

"Go to the ant . . . consider his ways and be wise."—
Proverbs vi. 6.

"Like bees."—Psalm cxviii. 12.

SELDOM do most of us get near enough to a bee-hive to know much about its life. Although the ant-hill is much nearer, we know little more about that. But there is a big truth in each of these small spots.

To begin with, each bee or ant has its own task. In the bee-hive those bees that do one thing never do any other. Those that tend the eggs and those that gather the honey are not the same ones. In the ant-hill it seems also to be that certain ants have certain tasks and they do only those. They are specialists.

Secondly, this specializing, so that each one of the insects has only its one bit of work to do, different from all the rest, is possible only because all the others are working at *their* tasks. *Each one depends on all the others.* What would the bees do whose duties are all inside the hive if there were no bees to fly out into the fields for the flower-honey? And what would these flying bees do if it were not for the drones inside the hive that relieved them of the necessity of tending the eggs and feeding the young bees? What would the army of ants do if

it were not for the path-finders and road-makers? What would the scouting ants do if there were not others to carry the baggage? Each one *must* have all the others at their own bits of work to be able to give all its time and strength to its own kind of work. Each belongs to others and others to him. Each serves the whole and the whole serves him.

Thirdly, what is the true life of the bee-hive or ant-hill, the lives of the separate ants and bees, or the life of the whole hive or ant-hill that uses each insect as it will? There is something greater that has been made possible because there is such helpfulness each to the others. The spirit of the hive or the life of the ant-hill as a whole, this is more than the adding up of the lives of the tiny members.

Saint Paul has the same idea about our own bodies. The hand does its work because it can depend on the eyes and the ears and the heart and the lungs to do their parts. Each serves the whole body, but the whole body serves each part. "At your service," is the motto of everything in the body to all the remainder. But the hand and the eye and the heart and the lungs all added together do not make the *soul* that uses them all. God has put Himself into this organized life as the true power.

Now carry the thought out into our life side by side. We are in the great bee-hive or ant-hill of the world. Or we are parts of the great body of humanity.

First, each one will find his own particular kind of a task. Storekeepers, doctors, lawyers, housekeepers, school teachers, policemen, cooks, tele-

phone-linemen, postmen, conductors and engineers, bookkeepers, waitresses, stenographers, and so on and so on, are all necessary to each other and each to all. One could not work for the rest if all the rest were not working for him. And it is just as true in the world of thought and feeling. Each good worker serves all other workers. So it is first of all our place to BE SOMETHING, and then GIVE THAT SOMETHING TO ALL THE WORLD IN RETURN FOR ALL IT GIVES US.

Next, the whole world is for me or you to use. Not only the things that are made and done, but those that are thought and loved. Somehow it is all for us to take from if we care to. I can be made strong by the strength of soul of the rest of the universe. It belongs to me if I belong to it.

Lastly, it is together this way that we learn that God is the Life of the Whole. He is the Spirit of our bee-hive world, the Life of our ant-hill of mutual help. He is the Soul in the great body of life. And all that is in the whole is ours. *By togetherness we find Him in the heart of the Whole.*

The Eighth Sunday
After Trinity

“ FOLLOW-THE-LEADER ”

“ Follow Me ! ”—St. Luke ix. 59.

THERE is no game that is quite so much fun as a good game of “ Follow-the-Leader.” That is, when the leader dares us to do daring enough things. Up over fence-tops, balancing; up trees and out branches, to swing off to the ground; squirming through ladders; jumping the brook! Anywhere the leader goes, we can and will follow him. He cannot leave us behind.

Not only boys love this game, I know; for I have seen many a girl get into it too. The “ dare ” grips us all.

What is the reason why this game pulls us into it so surely? Is it not that hard things are put before us as a challenge? *It is the difficulty that makes the fun.* Who wants to follow an easy leader? Not you and I! The harder the leader can make it, the better for us.

The very worst thing that can happen as we grow up is that we shall forget the idea of “ Follow-the-Leader.” There may come a time when the easy thing, not the hard one, attracts us. We are not thrilled as we used to be by a “ dare.” We don’t look at the things we are supposed to accomplish as “ fun ” any more, if they cannot be done without trouble.

I have only one simple thing to say to you to-day. Christian life is not easy. Don't ever let yourself think that it is. It is the hardest life that there is. But it is a noble kind of fun, because it is a noble game of "Follow-the-Leader." Christ "dares" us to be always unselfish, to make an adventure in trusting Him when He leads out into self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness. It is a challenge which those of us who are still young in heart will always spring to meet. The hard things are no mere fences and ladders and brooks; they are keeping your temper when you are angered, and seeing some one else get the thing that you wanted and not being jealous; they are cheerfulness when it is hard to be cheerful, and patience when it is not natural to be patient. And more of the same sort of difficulty. Christ leads on ahead into a new kind of happiness. Nothing that can come will be too hard for the follower who treads close behind Him. The harder the path the more feeling of joy when we look back, having tried it and done it for Him.

Easy things make lazy souls. Difficulties accepted as a "dare" make for adventure and heroic worth. We shall more surely be worth while if we conquer difficulties than if we dodge them and whine when they cannot be dodged. There stands the Master. "Follow Me!" He says. And we, if we are brave, will follow after. "Follow-the-Leader!"

THE COACH OF THE TEAM

“ Striving together for the faith.”—Philippians i. 27.

SOME mothers do not approve of football. They will not let their boys play. Many girls only see in it a “ rough and tumble ” that they think is “ horrid.” I don’t say that it *is* gentle and that there may not be dangers, but I know, too, that every real boy learns something in football he does not learn in lessons, which is going to be the best lesson he can learn. Perhaps we can make the game less dangerous, but *do not* stop the game! *It teaches Team-Play!*

Here are eleven boys getting ready for a game. And there is only one ball to get forward. Each one of the eleven men has his share of the duty of the whole team. He probably will not touch the ball himself, but he will help somewhere in the team-play that makes the team one. The thing that is wanted is that the team shall be like a well-oiled, living machine; that every lad shall know just what he is to do and shall do it. “ Interference ” takes certain ones; the backs have a certain other part in the charge; the centre and guards have another. No lad must blunder into doing another one’s bit. A place for every one and every one in his place! Those who sit in the stands may only see a whirl of arms and legs as one team ploughs into the other, until presently one player shoots

out of the scrimmage with the ball under his arm for a clear run. They do not know how carefully all the movements were planned; that the queer numbers the quarter-back shouted were putting cogs in the machine that would in a second grind into powerful attack. They did not know that the one who was really more in the team than any other was sitting on the side-lines, not even in football clothes! They do not appreciate the coach—unless they understand football.

The coach is the master of team-play. He has the absolute right to tell each player what he must do. He sends one man with the ball, and sets another to running in the opposite direction to trick the other team if he can. And some of the players he makes into a pushing mass that allows no player his chance to be free and be seen. The men of the team are the fingers of his hand, to do as he says.

What would happen to the player that "grabbed" the ball for himself? What would be the result if between plays all the lads got together and quarrelled who should have the next chance?

What would the score be if the team was not a team, but only eleven separate players with eleven separate ideas of what ought to be done? To say the least, that team would be beaten so badly we would wonder how they ever dared try a game. No matter how husky the separate members were, too! Team-play is needed to win, and a coach is needed for team-play.

Notice, nevertheless, that the coach is not doing it for himself. He commands because he wants to help. He has to be the only mind that is listened

to, because he is anxious the team shall be powerful. When the time to take the team-picture comes, he does not want to be in it. He gives all the honour to the fellows who have learned their difficult lesson and have done the playing.

You and I are ever so likely to be like the eleven men without a coach. Each of us thinks he knows best. We work at cross-purposes. We bump into each other and we grasp for the ball. We get in each other's way. We are not a team, for we have no team-play in our daily life. Even if some one comes who offers to coach, we spend our strength shouting, "Who are you, anyway? What right have you to tell me what I ought to do?"

I want you to think of two things to-day. They do not need explanation, if you know what team-play is and the place and the rights of a coach. The Church is the coach of life. Without its commanding, where are we? Without team-play or victory. The Church is to be obeyed as the coach is obeyed. That is the first thought. The second is, that we must obey the Church's coaching in the same spirit we obey the coach of the team; because we know it is for our sake, not the coach's, that the coach works. It is to make us win, to give us by team-play the power we should have together for victory. The coach gives himself to the team. He commands because he forgets himself. He is the voice of the team-play itself! This is the commanding voice of the Church; the voice of our own togetherness before we recognize it. It is *we as we shall be* that command *ourselves as we are* to team-play.

A SACRIFICE HIT

“For thy sake.”—Psalm lxix. 7.

THIS is a base-ball little-sermon. About a Sacrifice Hit. Boys will know what I mean right away, and I think girls will pretty soon.

There is a man on base ahead of you when you come to the bat. And perhaps you are not one of those players that can always knock a home run every time up. You can at least hit the ball somewhere, though. Now, if you hit the ball thinking only of yourself, what will happen? The man ahead may be nearer the ball than you when it is caught, and be put out. If it goes to the short-stop, you can get to first base, but the other fellow will probably be put out on third. You are interested, however, in helping your team to win. It doesn't make much difference (except to a selfish player) *who* makes the runs, as long as they do get made by *some one*. So you do what you can with your medium skill and strength. As long as your hit will probably not be a big one, you hit the ball so that the other team will have to be so busy putting you out that the other chap can get ahead without any bothering. What if you do get put out? There he is, that much nearer home plate. Or perhaps he has even come in with a run. That is a sacrifice hit. It is so worthy a thing that when the score

is made up it is not forgotten. The scorer gives you credit for a "sacrifice." You helped win the game. You added to the score by being put out.

When you and I come to think of the team-play of life, we must think, too, of sacrifice hits. There are our prayers, as an illustration of what I mean. We pray that God will send us this or that thing that we think we want. Are we wanting to make the base, no matter what happens to the other fellow? Are we so eager to make a hit for our own personal benefit that we forget the team's chances? Are our prayers only for ourselves, no matter what happens to others, or are they for the success of all? It may be wisest for God to say no if we are *not* ready to make a sacrifice hit! It may seem that we are not getting the thing that we want if the others make the runs by our being put out. But God knows best. When the score is made up, God counts the sacrifice hits as being splendid and victory-bringing. It is those who are willing to pray the largest prayers that get them answered oftenest. It is those who say to themselves, "I must do what I can for the greatest good of the greatest number," that are counted as true team-players.

Yes, we have to learn to be willing to make sacrifice-hits when they are needed before the great Captain can rely on us. And He will say, "Well done," when we work for the sake of the victory of the whole team and for Him, forgetting our own selfish desires. I would rather be a good "sacrifice hitter" than to succeed at the cost of others. Wouldn't you?

The Eleventh Sunday
After Trinity

“ FOR KEEPS? ”

“ Thou shalt not steal.”—The Sixth Commandment.

PERHAPS you will not think this is a sermon at all. It is only the answer to a question I am asked ever so often by boys, “ Why is it wrong to play this or that game ‘ for keeps ’? ” Marbles or tops or anything else.

I know what is usually said for it. And probably those of us who say it, believe it too. “ Why not? It’s all a matter of skill. Any fellow that isn’t willing to put his skill up beside mine for keeps needn’t do it, that’s all. It’s a chance we all take. If I am willing to run the risk of losing about so many marbles, why isn’t it perfectly right that I should think it is only a kind of pay for my fun? ” Then some one else says, “ It’s just as right as it is to match pennies, or for my older sister to play auction bridge for money, or for my father to make a bet.”

One thing at a time, please.

First, that argument that the risk of losing is only a kind of paid admission to a game. Do *you want* to pay it? Or do you intend that some one else shall instead? *Isn’t the whole idea that you shall make yourself better off at your friend’s expense?* In any good bargain, both people in it get something they want. If I buy something in a store, for

instance, I get something that will make me better off, and the store-keeper gives his goods for my money. I have the thing I want and he has some reward for making and providing it for me. We are both satisfied. But when I set out deliberately to get something for nothing if I can, I am intending, and I'd best admit it, to leave my friend poorer than he was and myself richer, without having earned it by giving him something. I can't see much difference between that and stealing when you come right down to the bottom of the matter. What is stealing? Taking without earning. And earning is giving something in return for what we get. It is the opposite of a "good trade," which leaves both sides happier. Stealing is getting something for nothing. I don't care whether we get it by prising up a window at night and climbing, masked, into a dining-room where the silver is, or whether we are using either skill or luck to take advantage of a friend. It is about the same thing, unless in size of the fault. No, I'm afraid I can't see how making myself better off by making you worse off is ever right. No matter how much excitement and adventurous risk there is, it isn't any better kind of excitement than the excitement the burglar has.

Next, that argument that others who are older seem to be doing the same thing, though not with marbles or tops or such youthful things. We have to say at once that you are probably right if you claim that many of these things are just the same as playing "for keeps." They are the same habits grown up. But because others do it,

does that make it right? I see a big danger ahead which you may not. It is the danger of the growing up of the idea of taking advantage! I do not want you to find that belief in your heart when you are men and women, “I’ll take all I can get, and give as little as I must.” Or, “Something for nothing, if I can work it.” As we grow up we are supposed to give more and more to the world and to take from it only what we earn. We are supposed to think first of making our neighbour better off, not worse. We are challenged to be helpers. We have to put out of our minds the excitement that comes from selfishness, even if it is the adventurous and almost brave selfishness which all gambling brings with it. It may be better than meanness, but it is worse than helping each other. And that is the only Christian kind of a bargain.

Keep this as a motto: “I HAVE THE RIGHT ONLY TO WHAT I EARN, BY GIVING SOMETHING WORTH HAVING IN RETURN FOR WHAT I GET.”

“Something for nothing” is not a sentence we can think of Christ saying or thinking. Then why should we?

**The Twelfth Sunday
After Trinity**

[A blackboard for the "figuring."]

FRACTIONS AND DECIMALS

"Reckon yourselves."—Romans vi. 11.

I CONFESS I never liked arithmetic. Is there any one here who does? But it is very necessary, just the same, no matter how bothersome. There is the arithmetic of our characters too. Saint Paul tells us we must "reckon ourselves up." He is probably right. Let's try it.

What shall we start with? Are we whole numbers, complete and entire? As for me, I know *I* am not—*yet*. My life is much more like a fraction. Also I imagine yours must be.

I am going to put a fraction on the blackboard and ask you to answer not me but yourselves what it is worth.

Above the line I write, "What I have done." Below the line, "What I had the chance to do." Then comes the equation mark and for the present a question-mark. So the fraction reads :—

$$\boxed{\frac{\text{What I have done}}{\text{What I had the chance to do}} = ?}$$

We all know how a fraction works. The larger

the figure above the line and the smaller the figure below in proportion, the greater the value of the whole fraction. Here under the line is the sign of all the chances we have of doing good or of doing wrong. If the amount is a big one, what should the upper figure be? If the lower figure is of good chances, we want the top one to be high as well. We should like to have it equal. But if we have not done all the good we have had the chance to do in our lives, the nearer we come to it the better. We want the answer to be more nearly $\frac{99}{100}$ than we do $\frac{1}{100}$ or even $\frac{1}{2}$. You will each have to figure it up for yourselves. Remembering that the upper figure ought to be nearly equal to the lower one, which is never a small one, but always great. The answer you get is the value of your character. "Reckon yourselves up."

But there is another way of figuring fractions: by the decimal system. Perhaps you will find this easier. I write down on the blackboard a row of figures. Say these, for instance, 153647798. Next I put in the decimal point. Where? The nearer the front I put it, the less the whole sum amounts to. If I put it clear at the front, it makes it worth least of all. The further back I put it, however, the more the value mounts. Think what the worth is if we put the decimal point clear out at the back!

In the reckoning up of our worth by the decimal system instead of by fractions the decimal point is our thought of ourselves. The further front we put it, the less we are worth. The further back it is pushed, the more we are worth. How fine if

we can only put it clear back out of the reckoning !
Jesus did.

Either way of reckoning ourselves up brings the same results. But we have to figure them for ourselves. No one knows the figures but we. Will we "reckon ourselves up" with them?

The Thirteenth Sunday
After Trinity

[A basket of flowers.]

HOW SUBTRACTION SOMETIMES ADDS

ARITHMETIC tells us that subtraction subtracts. Ten from fifteen leaves less than fifteen; twenty from fifty leaves only thirty. What remains is less than what there was. "Of course," you say, "that is the only way subtraction works." But I'm not so sure. There is another kind of arithmetic than that in the school books. This other kind works the opposite way. Taking away leaves *more* than there was, not less. Subtraction adds! Here's a story to prove it.

In a little New England village lived a motherly old lady who had a flower-garden. Behind the white picket fence nodded roses, dahlias, phlox, lilies, marigolds, daisies, lilacs and hollyhocks; and so many other kinds of bright flowers there is no time to name them. The old lady could be seen any morning with her sunbonnet and scissors, out in the sunshine, snipping away at her flowers. She hummed a little tune as she worked, and her big grey cat followed her, rubbing against her skirts, purring. Every one loved her and called her "Aunty."

Out against her gate-posts hung two big baskets full of the flowers she cut, and over them was a printed card which said, "Take all you want." As soon as the baskets were empty, they were filled

again to the brim. She would not let them stay empty. The postman always took a flower for his buttonhole and a few roses for the little lame boy down the Farm Lane. The stage-driver stopped his horses in front of the gate and climbed down for an armful to give to the dusty travellers in the stage. The chore-boy who drove home the squire's few cows stopped for a flower for his battered straw hat. Any tramp shuffling by might take a lilac spray as dessert for his crusts. The children going to and from school found the baskets packed full for them, and the teacher's desk and the supper tables at home all had their fragrant bouquets. And the little old lady smiled as she cut more blossoms to keep the baskets a-brimming.

Some of her friends leaned over the fence and tried to urge her not to be so generous. "You won't have any left for yourself," they told her. "You will give every flower away if you keep on this way all summer, and your garden will be cheerless and bare." "Oh, no!" smiled the little old lady. "I know my garden. The more flowers I cut, the more I will find! If I left the flowers untouched, they would stop blossoming! Didn't you know that flowers bloom faster when you cut the blossoms every day?"

Do you see? Subtraction does not subtract, but it adds! THE MORE I GIVE; THE MORE I HAVE! This is not only with flowers; it is so with kindnesses and generousities always. We think sometimes that what we give away in self-forgettings and helpfulness we lose; but we don't! What we give, we really add to our true selves. We are the richer

for the "Gifts of self" we make. Our hearts are like the little old lady's garden; it is only when we stop giving away that we find its happiness stops blooming. In our heart-life addition subtracts; but subtraction adds!

This is what Jesus Christ came to teach us. Do we know what He said? "VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, HE THAT SAVETH HIS LIFE SHALL LOSE IT; BUT HE THAT LOSETH HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE SHALL FIND IT." Think of the baskets of flowers on the gate-posts when you hear that great saying; for when Jesus speaks of "losing a life" for His sake, it is such things as this that He means in the garden of the heart!

The Fourteenth Sunday
After Trinity

SWEARINGS

“Swear not at all.”—St. Matthew v. 34.

THIS is not the kind of a sermon you will like, I'm afraid. It is a medicine-sermon; a bit bitter, but good for us. I feel it is *very much* needed by all.

A flag of truce means something peaceable in the midst of war. A soldier climbs up out of the trench with a handkerchief tied to a stick. Others follow him. The flag of truce says to the enemy, “Don't shoot and I won't. I want to talk something over with you of tremendous importance.” And the enemy lowers his guns and waits, accepting the white flag of peace. But suddenly the flag carrier pulls out his revolver and so do all his companions. They are so close to the enemy they have an advantage. And they shoot right and left. Is that fair?

Words are like flags. They have certain meanings. Other people take our words to mean what they should mean. They trust us to feel as we talk. It is the only way they can tell what we really are in our hearts. We should use our words honestly, not deceiving those who think we mean what we say. They have a right to expect us to be “square” with them.

We hear a great deal said about swearing. What makes it wrong? Why, just this; we say words that mean the dearest, most holy thoughts possible, and all the time do not mean them at all. Perhaps we mean just the opposite, and use these noble words as a cover for impatience, irritability or anger! Is not that like a flag of truce and a pistol-shot from behind it? The Commandment puts it plainly, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." In vain! Yes—emptily, uselessly, meaning nothing. It is perfectly right to take God's name when we think of Him rightly. We do it in our prayers, in our hymns, in our serious talking. No one feels that is wrong, because it is honest.

I listen to boys and girls talking, and sometimes my blood runs cold when I hear some of the words that they use. I admit that if the boys and girls do not know what they are saying, it is not *quite* so bad as though they did. But there is usually a "swear-feeling" behind the toned-down holy words they abuse. They think if they change the holy word just a little it will not be swearing, but will still give them the thrill. Do we recognize some of the exclamations we use? Let's examine a few.

"Christopher Columbus" gets its idea from the first syllable. "Jiminy" is a handed-down word from the time when most folks knew a little Latin, and that "Jesu Nomine" means "In the name of Jesus." "Jiminy Crickets" is "In the name of Jesus Christ." "Judas Priest" is "Jesus Christ" over again. "Golly" is "Godly," which used to

mean "By God." "Gee!" is the beginning of "Jesus." "For the love of Green Cheese" (or of anything else) simply takes out the word "God" from a well-known phrase and puts in some foolish substitute. "Goodness" is not so holy a word perhaps, but surely it is used because its echo is something like "God." It is certainly used when there is no thought of Goodness in mind. "Heavens," Jesus Himself tells us not to use, "for it is God's throne." I could go on and on. We may not have known what the words meant, but this is their story. Why did we use them? We did not mean them. Abraham Lincoln once said, "My mother taught me that any exclamation with the little word 'by' just ahead of it was swearing. I have never ceased to be grateful to her for the hint."

Perhaps you think boys swear more than girls? I'm not so sure. For there are other swearings than oaths. When I hear a group of girls chattering about a "most absolutely divine dress," or "the most exquisitely adorable pair of dancing pumps you ever saw," or the "Most unutterably ravishing cake," or the "most idiotic lunatic and stupid that ever was"; when I hear this sort of superlative I cannot just smile. For it is very close to swearing to say *any* noble words in vain. All fine things and highest feelings are near God and from God. Reverence belongs to them all. Let us be careful. Let us read over again what Jesus said: "Swear not at all; neither by Heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst

not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, yea, yea; nay, nay; *for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*"

We must say what we mean, and mean what we say. It is all a matter of honesty !

The Fifteenth Sunday

After Trinity

[A large paper with a perfect circle
drawn upon it.]

GIOTTO'S O

"Who hath despised the day of small things?"—
Zechariah iv. 10.

ONCE in a while I hear some one say he is no artist. "Why, I couldn't even draw a straight line!" he exclaims. "Or a circle, either, I suppose." Such a person does not realize that he has named the hardest things of all. An absolutely straight line or a perfect circle takes a trained hand, a steady eye, a clear brain. Very few, even skilful artists, can draw thus. If you doubt it, go home and try it for yourself.

In Italy many years ago the Pope of Rome wanted his magnificent new chapel decorated. Naturally he asked for the very greatest painter to be found. His friends and messengers were sent to seek out the most wonderful genius the world held. They inquired here and there; they asked many, many artists to send in paintings for the Pope to see, by which to make decision. By and by, in a little town, one artist-hunter found an unknown painter, working quietly in his studio. His name was Giotto. Around him were standing finished pictures more splendid than any this discoverer had yet happened upon; he stood before them, silent with his admiration. "Will you give

me something that I may carry to the Pope to show him your skill?" he asked Giotto, after he had explained for what he had been searching. He thought, of course, that Giotto would choose some beautifully finished painting, the best he had to send. But Giotto picked up a smooth white piece of painting-board, and with one sweep of his arm drew an absolutely perfect circle! "Take that to the Pope," he said. "Tell him how you saw me draw it; he will know what it means." The messenger hesitated and objected: it was some splendid picture that he thought Giotto should send. Giotto shook his head and only answered, "Take him that circle. The Pope will understand!" And so, against his will, the messenger brought the board to the Pope. To his surprise, his master turned from all the great pictures all the other artists had sent in, and having seen the circle and heard its story, the Pope said, "The man who drew this circle is the most skilful artist of them all. It is to Giotto I will give the chance!"

Just a little thing, perfectly done! Just a round O, perfectly drawn. People still talk of Giotto's O. And that is the thought they have: JUST A LITTLE THING, PERFECTLY DONE. Are you and I drawing quite perfect O's, or are our circles irregular and uneven? How are we doing the *little* things, I wonder? Just a little helpfulness somewhere—is it like Giotto's O? Some other moment just a cheery smile when some one was feeling blue—Giotto's O again! Does something seem too small to be worth doing well? We want to do some big and show-off things instead? We would

rather not be thorough in the tiny things? Let's remember Giotto's O and draw ours perfectly! Lessons well learned and without grumbling; errands run and kindling chopped; stockings darned and kitchen swept. All of these are Giotto's O's!

The Scotch folk have a saying, "MANY A MICKLE MAKES A MUCKLE." The little things make the big things of life. The small but perfect circle comes from the great skill. Are we drawing one hour by hour, in the little duties well done, the little chances well used, the little helpfulnesses well thought of, the little difficulties thoroughly overcome? If we are ever tempted to think, "It's only show-off things that matter," let us remember Giotto's O, and draw one ourselves then and there!

**The Sixteenth Sunday
After Trinity**

*A baptismal shell; silver or
natural.]*

BATTLE-AXE OR SCALLOP-SHELL? ¹

“Go ye into all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.”—
St. Matthew xxviii. 19.

WITH the clatter of heavy chains the spiked portcullis dropped behind a horseman. Clothed in armour from head to foot, astride a gigantic armoured horse, he made the drawbridge thunder as he spurred vigorously across it. At the bend of the road he turned and waved his hand toward a white flutter of handkerchiefs in the turret of the great grey castle. Then the shadows of the forest path swallowed him up.

Except for the thud of the horse's heavy hoofs there was silence all about him. Even the birds stopped singing as he came. His steady eyes gazed straight ahead. His mouth was shut in a thin, grim line. He rode like a man in the grip of a spell. His free hand closed about the handle of the battle-axe hanging by his saddle, and a faint, cold smile crossed his face. What a battle-axe that was! Its twenty-pound steel head, edged like a knife, could slice at one drive through armour, flesh and bone. It was a butcher-weapon, made for slaughter!

¹ Reprinted by permission from *Warfare*, published 1916 by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of America.

Suddenly the war-horse stopped short and pricked up his ears. Somewhere ahead somebody was singing. Presently the rider caught sight of a man striding buoyantly down the path; a friar with a staff of pilgrimage swinging lightly in his hand. At the sound of a traveller so near, the pilgrim stopped, hoping for companionship.

"All hail, Sir War-maker!" he called as he spied the knight. "Whither away?"

"I go a-crusading, Brother Pilgrim," proudly answered the man in armour. "And you?"

"Oh, I, too, go on a crusade," was the reply. "But my crusade and yours are very different."

"Yes," said the horseman, contemptuously. "Mine is a crusade of warfare; but yours, I surmise, is a crusade of peace!"

The friar laughed good-naturedly. "My warlike friend," quoth he, "I know how you feel toward me and my mission. Nevertheless will I put my trust in my kind of warfare rather than in yours, and I leave it to the ages to decide which of us is wiser. Before the judgment seat of the ages, I challenge you to a tourney of ideals!"

The warrior looked down into the friar's eyes with surprise. Who might this be that dared to challenge him and all he represented—this young man, so straight and tall, so vigorous with health and the joy of living, and possessing eyes that smiled so kindly as they flashed their challenge?

"Very well," exclaimed the horseman. "Then I put my trust in this," and he stroked his battle-axe. "This is the right weapon for warfare."

“And I,” said the pilgrim, “put my trust in what this stands for,” whereat he held up a scallop-shell which hung at his girdle. “This is the symbol of world service, of my duty as a soldier of Christ. It is for baptizing, not for killing.”

The knight threw back his head and laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks. “So be it, then,” he cried in derision. “Scallop-shell against battle-axe! Let the ages decide between them. What a contest! But pray tell me wherein you think that the scallop-shell compares with the battle-axe as a weapon of warfare?”

Then said the pilgrim very seriously, “It is largely a question of what you call a victory, O Man of Iron! Is victory smashing down or building up?”

There was silence for a space, for as the friar desired, the warrior was struggling with a new idea. Victory? What was victory? Was it the mere temporary ousting of an enemy from his camp, the mere seizing of a pile of treasure, of a mile of land, or a fortified castle or two? After all, what was he fighting for?

The path led out of the forest. Between the last tree-trunks shone the blue sea, fringed with white sails where the waiting ships rode at anchor beside the great camp of the Crusaders. The warrior's eyes flashed at the sight. He reined in his horse and pointed to the camp. “With that company I go to take the Holy Land,” he cried; “therefore I wield my battle-axe!”

The friar answered, and his eyes flashed also, “In the company of God and His Saints, I go to

192 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

MAKE a Holy Land. Therefore, I carry my scallop-shell ! ”

Now which of them is right? It is for you to decide. When you sing, “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” which is the warfare that you want waged? It will be as you say—the future is in your hands.

**The Seventeenth Sunday
After Trinity**

[Picture of a river steamboat.]

THE WHISTLE WITH A STEAMBOAT

“Pride goeth before a fall.”—Proverbs xvi. 18.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN used to tell a story about a steamboat on the Mississippi. I suppose it was a true story, too. It was a little steamboat with a little furnace and a little boiler. But it had a big, big whistle! You might better say the whistle had a steamboat than that the steamboat had a whistle. Now the captain of the steamboat was a proud old chap, who thought his boat was as fast and fine as any on the river. He would shout down to the men who stuffed the furnace with its wood, “Pitch in pine-knots ’til she won’t hold any more!” And the fire would roar, the sparks and shooting flames would come out the smoke-stack top, the steam would hiss in the leaky boiler, the paddle-wheel would start its digging down into the water—and the old boat would start! Up-stream against the current it would puff and splash. Then the old captain would get proud. He would want the other bigger boats to see how he was chugging up the river—and he would give the order, “Blow the whistle!” The engineer would pull the whistle-rope and the big whistle would hoarsely scream—until all the steam the boiler held was gone! The paddle-wheel would stop; the boat would be carried

by the current back down-stream, and they must start all over again to get up steam !

It is a funny story. But it has a meaning for us all. We have to go up-stream as we live and grow. We have the current of things against us, and must plough through it, on and up. Things that are worth having must be worked for. We have to get up the steam of our will-power to make headway. If we get satisfied, however, and are contented with what we have so far done, it is like blowing that big whistle on the steamboat—it takes all the steam we needed for hard work, for getting strongly ahead, and uses it just to shout, “ I’m pretty well satisfied with myself.” The whistle of self-satisfaction may only toot inside our hearts, but it takes the steam of will-power just the same. Back down-stream we drift, and have to start all over again. Self-satisfaction has taken all our power !

This is Abraham Lincoln’s story. But I want to add to it something another great hero once wrote. Oliver Cromwell wrote on the blank page in the front of his most-used Bible, “ HE WHO STOPS BEING BETTER, STOPS BEING GOOD.” Learn that motto, and think of the whistle with a steamboat when you say it to yourself. We cannot be entirely satisfied with ourselves without using all our steam in the foolish, boasting whistle. Let us always remind ourselves, “ HE WHO STOPS BEING BETTER, STOPS BEING GOOD,” and, “ WHEN I HAVE DONE A GOOD THING THEN I MUST DO STILL BETTER.”

The Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity

[An anchor and some rope
(or a picture)]

“ I WILL ”

A SAIL-BOAT is not much use without a wind. Fishermen know this only too well. The breeze stops, the sail flaps and droops, the water grows mirror-like and the boat stops ! And it is perhaps almost to the harbour and home ! What can the fisherman do ? Just sit and wait, “ whistling for a breeze ” ?

Far up the coast on a fishing island I know well, the crews of the little fishing schooners had their plan in advance. When a calm came, they knew what to do. Up in the bow of the boat they had a small anchor, shaped much like a spear until it opened. And to it was tied a long, light and strong rope. There it lay, all coiled ready for use. Then when the wind stopped, two men picked up the anchor, stood far out on the prow and swung the anchor like an arrow ahead, the rope following on. There would be a splash, and the coil of rope would keep on unwinding until soon came the word, “ She’s struck bottom.” The crew would jump up and, with a swinging “ togetherness,” pull the boat up to the far-ahead anchor. Then again it would be heaved in front ; they would pull the boat to it ; and again and again and again. It was slow work and hard work, but it got the boat into the

harbour and up to the wharf. It got the men home !

That is what you and I do when we make a true promise. We say, " I will," and our heart is shot out like that anchor ahead, and then we pull up to it. A promise gets us where we want to be, because it is something to take hold on and haul by ! Our best self goes on before us and we live up to it ! " I WILL," IS AN ANCHOR THROWN AHEAD TO PULL UP TO.

So when you see a thing you ought to do, say, " I will." Out goes the anchor of your promise to yourself and the world, with the long rope whirling after ; and " a long pull and a strong pull and a pull all together " begins, until by and by your pledge has brought you up to it. Then you throw your " I will " on forward again and pull up still further—and further and further. Thus you grow in Character. SO CHARACTER IS MADE.

**The Nineteenth Sunday
After Trinity**

[*A handful of downy feathers.*]

FEATHERS IN THE WIND

“ I will take heed that I sin not with my tongue.”—
Psalm xxxix. 1.

THE story as it came to me is this :—

A certain little girl had been talking unkindly of some one. At school they called it “ Tattling.” The teacher told her mother that her daughter had been “ gossiping.” At any rate, she had been carrying stories right and left as she shouldn’t.

Now the mother was a very wise mother. She wanted to teach her small daughter in a way she would not forget. She wanted her to *understand*. So she did not punish her, but called her and gave her a bag of downy feathers. “ Take these,” the mother said, “ and go up to the top of the hill where the wind is blowing. Remember that every feather is like a word you have said.” The child was puzzled, but she obeyed. Up to the top of the hill she climbed. The wind was blowing hard, brushing down the grass and bending the bushes and circling around the hilltop. Once she opened the bag of feathers the gusts of wind took them by handfuls and whirled them away. It looked as though it were snowing. Far and wide the feathers flew, many of them beyond her sight. The bag being now all emptied, the little girl trudged home. But

her mother met her at the door. "Go right back now," she said, "and gather again all the feathers!" "Why, mother, I can't do that!" exclaimed the daughter. "By now those feathers have been carried by the wind most to the edge of the world." "Little daughter of mine, don't you see what your tattling and tale-bearing and gossip has done? It is just as hard to get back your words as it is those flying feathers. I want you to go back and get as many as you can, no matter how hard it is to find them. And as you hunt for the few you *can* find, think of your talkings still flying beyond your guess, out and out into the world. You cannot get them all back, dear, try as long as you will. The best way is never to open the bag of feathers in the first place."

How well we all know the need of this lesson. We all have need some time of the bag of feathers, I fear. It is so pleasant to tattle and gossip! Buzz, buzz, the little group of us goes over a new story about somebody. "Now don't tell any one that I told you, for I said that I wouldn't tell; but Mehitabel told me that Katherine told her that Abigail Jones was jealous of Mabel." "Say, Henry, don't let on that you got it from me, but Sam told me that Johnny told him that Dick was caught cheating in school the other day. Of course, Dick says that he wasn't." "Did you see Lucy Brown's new dress? Isn't it homely? I don't believe it was new when she got it." "Did you know Jimmy Howard was laughing at you behind your back?" So the tattling goes—and goes—and goes—and goes! Once started no one can stop it. The bag

of feathers is wide open and the wind has them now. Get them back if you can! " Buzz, buzzz, buzzzzz. Shhhh! Somebody's coming! Don't tell that I told you, but I know all the time that you will." How would we feel if we were the one that is talked of so behind their hands?

It is bad enough so, but I am sorry to say there is worse. Stories grow. The next person always tells the news a little more startlingly than the last. What starts out to be only a gentle hint, ends by being a fact of much greater importance. Every one is apt to improve on the tale just a little!

How careful we must be! I have a good motto for us all. Will you learn it? Will you think of it? Will you make it a habit of all your thoughts? It will pay you in happiness many times over for the care that you take.

NEVER BELIEVE ANYTHING BAD ABOUT ANYBODY UNLESS YOU POSITIVELY KNOW IT IS TRUE. NEVER TELL EVEN THAT UNLESS YOU FEEL IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. GOD IS LISTENING WHILE YOU TELL IT.

WITHOUT WAX

“ Be thou sincere.”—Genesis xvii. 1.

THE temples of the Greeks were built of pure white marble. (How they shone in the sunshine !) All the white marble came from one tremendous quarry. It was Pentelican marble that was alone pure enough to put into the houses of worship of the gods. So the Greeks believed.

The marble blocks were gotten out of the quarry, and were also shaped and finished there. They were ready to put into place when at last they reached the temple-spot.

Now it sometimes happened that in the cutting of the marble a chisel slipped or another block chipped off a piece of the white building-stone. What should be done? If the quarryman was honest, and felt that he did not want any stone to go into the shrine of his god that was not absolutely perfect, he put the marred stone on one side and started another. The temple builders could trust such a man, and put his stones into place at once. But by and by, as people began not to be so very sure of the gods, and as the piles of spoiled stones grew higher, the quarrymen were not always so honest. They were anxious for all the money they could get, and they hated to let a spoiled stone be a loss to them. Therefore they obtained a certain hard wax,

just as white as the marble. With it they filled up every chipped-off place in the spoiled blocks. Smoothing it off even with the polished surface of the stone, they said to each other, "This will never be found out until the stone has been in its place so long that it cannot be taken out. We will send it along and trust to luck. They believe we are honest over here, anyway."

The stones were sent to the temple-place and the builders, trusting the honesty of the quarrymen, put them into the walls of the beautiful building. For many months they did not suspect that the stones were anything but what they appeared to be. But the hot sun of the summer and the rains of the spring and autumn ate into the wax here and there until it began to fall out. What indignant exclamations there were when it was discovered! The builders went to the quarrymen and said what they thought of them. But there was another temple to be built, and Pentelican marble was the best marble in the world, so they still must use it. They could not trust the quarrymen this time, however, so they wrote down in the agreement that the marble must be "without wax." In the Latin language those words "without wax" are "*sine cera*." You have not studied Latin yet, but I will write the Latin words down on the blackboard all together. You can tell me at once what the English word is that we get from this story. "Sincere!" "Without wax." What one seems to be and what one is, the same thing.

"Be thou sincere!" Those are the words out of our Bible. Be without wax. That means that

202 CHURCH YEAR SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

we must be all the same straight through our lives. As the boys say, "No bluffs." We must make ourselves as perfect as we can, for we are being built into the walls of a temple of Life for the True God. Being sincere does not mean showing ourselves as we are if we happen to be imperfect and marred. It means something better than that. It means that we should be as perfect as the temple needs, and *need* no wax at all. God help us to be sincere, remembering the story behind the splendid words, "Be ye sincere."

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

“Thou shalt love.”—St. Mark xii. 31.

IT is a sorry day for us if we get over being fond of good fairy stories. We ought never to outgrow them entirely, even if we now know they are only imagination. For most of them are true *stories*. They are true at heart, and that is the most important thing, after all.

There is the fairy story, for example, of Beauty and the Beast. There was the hideous Beast, made what he was by evil enchantments, with the curse on him that he could not be changed back to the handsome prince until some one was willing to kiss him as he was. The grateful princess at last does so, although it is ever so hateful a thing for her to bring herself to; and the transformation comes! She made herself do it, and what a reward she received in the fine young man whom she happily fell in love with and married! “And they lived happily ever afterward,” of course.

It's not a very likely story, is it? Yet there is something that is true in the very best way. The princess made herself kiss the Beast and the change took place *after* that. If she had waited for the handsome young man to appear, she would have been waiting still. She took the first step in that which turned out so miraculously. She put her

will into her loving deed, and found it broke the curse.

Jesus used to repeat the old commandments again and again, "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God, and thy neighbour." What he meant was, "Thou shalt *make* thyself love." There is something we *make ourselves do* in true love. Although we cannot feel it about God, there are many times when our neighbour does not seem much more attractive to us than the Beast did to Beauty—at first. That some one with whom we never did get along at all well, with whom we find ourselves always "on edge," who rubs us the wrong way—"Thou shalt *make* thyself love him." That boy or girl we somehow never happened to like and felt we never could, who made us sullen and "offish"—we must *make* ourselves love! That's what Beauty and the Beast tells.

"Oh, but," you say, "I just never could love any one I didn't *happen* to love. Love just happens, anyway. I can't send it wherever I want to. There are some people I naturally take to and some that I don't. I don't see what I can do about it. My heart goes as it wants to, and I cannot stop it or command it." There are some people we cannot help loving, I know. Without our trying we belong to them as affectionate admirers from the start. We "fall in love" with them as surely as a stone falls to the ground. That is all as true as preaching. And I do not suppose Jesus expects us to be able to love every one as deeply as that. There were some whom He loved more easily than others, the New Testament shows.

But that does not prove that we cannot and should not take ourselves in hand and make ourselves try to care for those others too. There is a place for the will in loving. We can stop disliking if we are in earnest about it. Beauty kissed the Beast, and it was no fun for her. But she did it because she was sure she ought to.

How surprised she must have been when the ugliness melted away and the clear eyes and hearty smile of the lovable lad showed from under the leathery skin! How happily we are surprised when the first resolve to appreciate some one we have not liked seems to turn him into some one after all not so bad! The more we try to appreciate people the more reason why we should makes itself plain. If we make ourselves love as much as we can, we find ourselves not being able to help it. That is the reward and the discovery that follows putting the will into the kind of love that is not easy at first, but a little like Beauty and the Beast. God is wiser than we. He does not want us to keep our love for the few we cannot help loving. He wants us, for our own sake, to make ourselves love those we *can* help loving just as easily as not—for He knows what is coming if we make ourselves try.

The Twenty-second Sunday
After Trinity
[A Japanese fish-kite.]

THE FISH-KITES

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."—1 John v. 4.

HAVE you ever wished you were Japanese? The only thing that would make me wish so is the holidays they have in Japan. There is something so quaint and so happy in them. There is the Boys' Festival, for instance. On a pole in front of almost every house in all Japan there fly great paper fish. They are made hollow, so that the wind can come in at the ring at the mouth and stuff the paper fish full of blowing air. Thus the fish swim in the wind with a most life-like wriggling. Think of fish like this one on poles in front of whole cityfuls of houses and of every thatched hut in the country too. And the wind blowing hard that day! Must it not be exciting?

Every fish-kite means that there is a boy lives in that house. As many boys as there are in the family, that many fish-kites there are on the pole. If there has been a baby boy born in the family since the last Boys' Festival, there is an extra big fish-kite to show it. (Those of you who are girls, do not be too jealous. There is a girls' festival, too, when the dolls take the place of the fish-kites; not on a pole, but in display.)

Every fish-kite is made after one pattern. They

are each and all of just one fish—the carp. You might think that the Japanese would like a variety, and that there would be every kind of fish you could think of, but no, there is only the carp. This is why. The carp does almost what our salmon do in America—at a certain time of year it leaves the ocean and starts to mount some swift-flowing stream. It is so vigorous a fish that no current seems to be too strong for it. Up, up, up it swims, steadily and strongly against the rushing water. When it comes to a waterfall it jumps high into the air to its crest and goes unerringly on. The Japanese admire this sturdy fish very much. They claim that almost nothing can stop it in its climb up-stream. Therefore they have made it a badge for boys. They want their boys to be just as sturdy and courageous. They want them to be able to plough their way up against the current of life. They want to be able to say, “Nothing can stop them.” This steady up-stream swim is the picture they have not only of their boys, but of their nation.

Might it not be a good picture for us to have of ourselves as we start out in life? When I was a lad the boys used to say, “Anybody can be a chip floating down-stream. The question is, can you swim *up*?” Do you and I want things to carry us with them? Do we just want to float with the current? Would we prefer to sail serenely down-stream, or to work our way up-stream? You see, it is really a matter of laziness. A lot of us think of laziness as being only sleepiness and stupidity of body. Laziness is something more.

It depends on the will. Is our *will* lazy? is the question. Do we have any right to the fish-kite out in front of the door of our heart? Or would it only be an untruth?

I want to remind you of one thing that lazy-willed folk forget. It *is* easier to float on the current of the stream, *but that is down-hill*. The more we float the lower we get! To get high we have to be strong swimmers against the stream. Yet that is what we truly desire, I hope.

This is the last Sunday of the Church Year. It has a nickname, "Stir-up Sunday." Yes, it is a queer nickname, but if you know your collect for the day, you will see why it has been given. The collect begins, "Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people." Stir up our wills! Exactly the meaning of the fish-kites! Fly one before the door of your heart! And make it an honest badge of your stirred-up will!

VI
VARIOUS

All Saints' Day

[*Some Hallowe'en mask
or symbol.*]

HALLOWE'EN

"I believe in the Communion of Saints."—The Creed.

LAST night was Hallowe'en. How many of you celebrated it? Did it occur to you at any time through the evening that Hallowe'en is the evening before All Saints' Day, and that Hallowe'en means Holy Evening? You would not suspect it from the Hallowe'en frolics, would you?

There were witches, sprites, ghosts and elfish creatures. Mysterious noises were at the windows. Fate and fortune were told in many a walnut shell asail in a tub with a burning candle for mast. Will-o'-the-wisp lights flickered weirdly. Friendly whisperings circled about our ears. And we were not afraid.

Hallowe'en is not so unreligious as it first pretends to be. There is something in it that is pretty fine, after all. What is its idea down at bottom but this: that friendly spirits are round about us, who have much to do with our fortunes, yet of whom we need not be in the slightest afraid? That there is an invisible world close to us, peopled by spirits who wish us well, and who help as far as they can?

You may not know much about death yet. It is too solemn and wonderful for many of us who are older to understand. But you are not too

young to begin with the feeling that lies back of Hallowe'en at its best, that the spirits of those who are now in the world that is invisible are not uncanny ghosts to be dreaded, but just as much friends and lovers as they were while they lived in the world of sight and touch. Being friendly, they help all they can. They watch over us, guide us and guard us. They speak to our hearts without our knowing who it is. They bring us strength. They work with us. They are shoulder to shoulder with our best endeavours.

I like Hallowe'en down under its absurdities and its fooling. It means something I find in the Creed, "the communion of saints." We are all bound up together, whether we are what we call "alive" or whether we are in the invisible world. Just as, as children, we believed absolutely in the fairies, so now, knowing better, we know still that the good spirits of the earth and the skies are near us and friendly.

One great Christian long ago thought of the great race-course in the Roman cities, where the crowds of people in the rising rows of seats leaned down and cheered on the runners in the race. They gave them strength by their applause and urging. They were intensely interested. They really sent forth their prayers for their favourites. They gave out life! He says the invisible spirits are like this: row on row in the seats above our hard racing, leaning down and urging us on; encouraging; sending us strength. "Wherefore, seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily

beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

There is nothing to be afraid of in the invisible world. The spirits of the holy dead are our friends. God, too, is a Spirit, and they are with Him. And He is with us.

“TWO MULES’ BURDEN OF EARTH”

2 Kings v. 17.

THE watchman on the tower heard a trumpet blow far off on the hill-road towards the south. He shaded his eyes with his hand and looked hard toward the horizon. And presently he saw, drawing nearer and nearer, a caravan of great length, winding down through the passes. There were the prancing of white horses ahead and the glitter of helmets and armour. The trumpet-call was joined in by others, and shouts of glee mingled with the salute. Runners came panting ahead to the city, wearing the king's own colours. It must be Naaman!! The watchman shouted down to the guard, and the news spread like fire in the city—that Naaman was returning home. And the joyful sound of trumpets and the shouts of the soldiers must mean that Naaman, who had gone down to Israel to see whether the strange prophet could heal him of his leprosy, was healed! Naaman, the king's friend and counsellor, whose evil disease had been such a grief to the nation. Naaman, the captain of the armies of Syria, brought back to life and strength by that far-away prophet; praised be his name!

The caravan came to the last climb, met by the outpouring people. They swarmed past the

horsemen, past the armoured foot-soldiers, to the great white camel, hung with scarlet and gold. The open palanquin swayed as the camel strode on. The curtains were up (they had been close-hooded when the songless caravan started out), and on the cushions sat Naaman the beloved, with a skin as fair as a child's! Outriders and rearguard seemed as proud of him as if they had healed him themselves. They joined in the exultant cry, "Naaman! Naaman! Welcome home! Praise be to Rimmon our god thou art healed!"

The white camel plodded on and up into the city; and only after the camel and Naaman had gone did men see that behind him walked two mules, guarded even more carefully than Naaman had been, with a double rank of warriors, their spears ready for use. What were these mules? What was in the sacks that covered their backs? What was it that seemed so heavy? A soldier spoke to a friend in the crowd and said, "Only earth!" Two mules' burden of earth! Dirt from Israel! What was it for? Even the king asked Naaman by and by.

Naaman told of his healing by the prophet Elisha, a man of Jehovah's faith. And of his own belief that Jehovah was mightier than Rimmon. "And I have brought two mule-loads of earth from Jehovah's own land to spread in my courtyard and build an altar upon to the God who has healed me." Naaman wanted to stand on ground he felt was lucky when he worshipped. The earth he had brought home seemed to stand for

his good fortune. On it he felt he could rightly offer thanksgiving.

To-day is Thanksgiving Day. Are we anything of Naaman's mind? Do we feel that we can offer thanksgiving better if we stand on the ground of our good fortune? That we stand on our good luck to praise God? I hope we know a little better than that. For we are Christian. And Christ has told us that we should not find our topmost happiness in any such thing. We are not to stand on the fact that we are more fortunate than others to give grateful acknowledgment to God.

I know how easy it is to say to ourselves, "You ought to feel thankful that you are a lot more fortunate than others. You are not so poor as some, you are not so crippled as some, you are not homeless, you are not like the Belgian children, for instance. Thank God that you are better off than these others are." It may be right to be grateful for what we have; but it is plainly wrong to compare ourselves to others, and gloat! For the one principle Jesus insists upon, is that we should feel our brothers' and sisters' troubles just as deeply as our own. *We cannot be entirely happy until they are happy. We cannot be content until they are content. We cannot be at peace until they are, as well. What hurts my loved one hurts me. Selfish thanksgiving is wrong.*

Let us start with our feeling of gratefulness for what we have. But let us add to it the Thankfulness that this which makes our lives complete

gives us the power to help. We are most of all grateful that we can become little Christs to those in need. For God in His goodness has fitted us to save and to work in His name *with what we have.*

TO THE RESCUE !

“ Grace to help in time of need.”—Hebrews iv. 16.

THE 4TH OF JULY is a religious day. It has always been so, but we never knew it as deeply as now. So here we are in church to show we have realized it at last.

Among the old legends, there are many that run something as this one which I am now going to tell you, because it seems made for to-day.

Outside the city a dragon had made its den in the marshes. It was a fearsome monster, with scales like a great snake and teeth like a tiger and claws like a vulture. It had a long, slimy body and red eyes, and its odour was like the swamps. Naturally every one was terror-stricken. The dragon demanded children to eat ! And the city sent him one every day. What else could they do ? They were too dazed with horror to fight this mountainous, nightmarish beast. And at last it came the turn of the little princess. The king locked himself up in his tower and prayed harder than ever for a deliverer. He felt one must come at last. But the dragon's roar was at the gates, thundering hideously his readiness to come in and lay everything waste if he did not get his daily ration. So the little princess was tied hand and foot, with her golden curls like the light of the sun and her white robe like her innocence. The great

gates of the city were swung open, creaking their protest. The little girl was hurriedly left out in the open where the dragon would come slithering, writhing up for her. And every one in the town bowed down to the ground and put fingers in his ears, shivering with the hatred of the thing he had had to do.

But suddenly outside the oaken gates there was a clatter of hoofs and the flash of armour. Inside the wall they heard a strong shout of defiance answering the dragon's snarling. There was the turmoil of a struggle. The sword of the champion flashed sparks from the dragon-scales. Trees came crashing down where the whipping tail of the monster struck them. The panting of his flaming breath became more and more laboured. The dragon groaned, and the knight drove his sword down his throat to the heart, then swung his battle-axe into his skull. The dragon was dead !

The people of the town poured out through the gates, shouting their glee at deliverance. The young warrior climbed down from his horse, cut the ropes that tied the princess's arms and feet, and kissed her forehead. Then he turned to meet the king. "I was passing over yonder road when I saw what was done here across the valley, and I had to come to do what I could." So spoke the victor-knight.

In every part of life there are evil things possible. But in the world to-day there has been a great dragon. That dragon was the idea, " Might makes Right." It was the idea of great power used against others to crush them. It was the idea of the War-

Lover. And how it sat before the gates of the world ! It demanded more and more of our childlikeness. It ate up gentleness and tenderness and innocence. From its lair in the swampy selfishness of life it crept brutally out until it threatened our sweetness of soul and the ideas of civilization. It came at last to this, that we must give up the dearest and most precious of all things, our Christian faith, as a living and beautiful princess of the soul. The world was being endangered by the increasing loss of its belief in spiritual things. The life that is in the pure and loving part of existence was bound hand and foot and approached by the dragon of Power. And the last dread was almost coming true.

But this nation of ours and the nations that believed in beauty and innocence and sweetness of soul came to the rescue. The War-Lover must be crushed for the sake of best things. The idea of Power must be slain. We are that champion of the princess. We are the slayers of heartlessness now ! We are at war, not because we love it, but because the War-Heart must be pierced with the sword of the knighthood of God. The world is not safe for the soul till the dragon is killed !

THE END

